

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

## **SEEKING THE 'C' IN THE 'Y'**

**DISCERNING THE MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN BASIS IN THE ENGLISH YMCA**

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requirements of Anglia Ruskin University  
for the degree of Professional Doctorate

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ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

(ii) ABSTRACT

FACULTY OF ARTS, LAW AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE

DISCERNING THE MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN BASIS IN THE ENGLISH YMCA

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This research has identified meanings attached by participants to the YMCA's Christian basis within the context of volatile environments by engaging with voices in a qualitative, inductive, small-scale research project within the English YMCA. My proposition was that people working in the YMCA were appointed on the understanding that it was Christian-based, that the corporate and collective agreed means of association were located primarily in the Christian basis and that the YMCA attached significant meaning to its Christian basis whilst operating within an inclusive environment.

Thematic descriptions of *voices in communication* were identified using a mixed set of research methods. The data were analysed in a between-method triangulation to produce *adialectic towards meaning*. Methods included: a literature review, interviews in a pilot study, a comparative historical review, facilitated groups, field visits and website surveys. I engaged various literary sources for interpretative perspectives on voices to differentiate participant's relationships with the Christian basis in terms of *audibility, affinity and attitude*.

The majority of participants felt that they had been appointed on the understanding that the YMCA is Christian-based, but very few had actually been given an opportunity, or felt it necessary, to make sense of it in their work. The Christian basis did not command a universally accepted meaning amongst participants. Instead, it was often perceived to have limited meaning, but with a degree of historical status attached to it. For the majority of participants, the actual corporate and collective agreed means of motivation was defined as care for young people within an inclusive environment and without any overt reference to the Christian basis and its meaning. However, where the Christian basis did feature locally it elicited communication that was complex, layered and variable in its nature. In these circumstances it produced powerful models of inclusive Christian service.

The research identified three implications for further consideration: (a) *ineffective communication* between member YMCAs resulting in; (b) the creation of disjointed and remote *islands of understanding* about the Christian basis; and (c) in turn generating *informal disassociations* as a key factor in diminishing the value of the Christian basis within local member YMCAs.

**Key Words:** Christian basis, meaning, YMCA, inclusivity, association, communication, voices.

### (iii) TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction to the YMCA and its Christian basis .....	1
Mapping the Research Journey.....	7
Justification of the Originality of the Research.....	10
Professional and Organisational Context.....	14
The Organisational Context of the Research .....	20
What is the YMCA's Relationship with the Church and Local Congregations?.....	25
Origins in Conversation with other Similar Organisations .....	29
Constitutional Considerations.....	48
The YMCA's Constitutional Position.....	48
Barnardo's Constitutional Position .....	51
The YWCA's Constitutional Adjustments .....	52
The Children's Society and its Unchanged Constitution .....	54
A Brief Theological Perspective on the Origins of These Organisations .....	54
A Summary Description of the YMCA's Categorisation in Context.....	56
<b>CHAPTER TWO: MY CONTEXT, THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>59</b>
Background Noise in my Research-My Motivations and Biases .....	59
Researcher as Instrument .....	68
Uncertainty - the Backdrop to the Research.....	70
Concepts Governing the Main Research Project .....	71
My Proposition.....	75
The Conceptual Framework .....	76
A Thoughtful Process of Refinement .....	86
The Philosophical and Paradigmatic Implications of My Approach.....	87
The Definition of Qualitative Research as the Chosen Method.....	95
<b>CHAPTER THREE: THE PILOT STUDY.....</b>	<b>97</b>
Thematic Report.....	102
The Christian Basis is Both a Key Motivation and a De-Motivation.....	102
The Christian Basis has an Unexplained Authority with an Intermittent but Often Veiled Presence.....	103
The Christian Basis is an Historical Artefact and a Legacy .....	104
Generic Spirituality is Detached from the Charitable Intention .....	105

Plausible Possibilities and Probabilities Arising from the Pilot .....	107
Review of the Pilot Study to Inform the Research. ....	107
Christian Basis .....	109
Spirituality .....	110
Inclusivity .....	111
My Response to the Pilot Research Question.....	111
Review of the Research Question in Light of the Pilot Study.....	112
Limitations of the Pilot Study .....	114
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: THE SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME.....</b>	<b>115</b>
An Overview of the Research Process.....	115
Description of Methods .....	118
Ethical Issues and Approval.....	118
Sampling.....	120
Data Collection Methods .....	124
Data Analysis Methods.....	130
Distinctive Emergent Themes from the Analysis .....	134
Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach One: Facilitated Groups .....	134
Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Two: Field Visits .....	137
Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Three: Website Survey of Non-Participatory YMCAs that were part of the Sample Group.....	140
Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Four: National Charity Commission Based Survey of Charitable Objects.....	142
Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Five .....	144
<b>CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION.....</b>	<b>145</b>
A Framework for Understanding Voices in Communication .....	145
The Audibility of Voices in the YMCA.....	153
Affinity with the Christian Basis .....	159
Christian and Other or Non-Faith Affinity .....	168
Confusion and Clarity Affinity .....	170
Compliant and Challenging Affinity.....	175
Church and Societal Affinity .....	179
Corporate and Individual Affinity.....	184
Attitudes Towards the Christian Basis .....	188
Cathedrals and YMCA Buildings as Interpretative Metaphors.....	189

The Four Attitudes Towards the Christian Basis .....	194
Ambivalence and Irrelevance.....	196
Ambiguity .....	197
Indifference .....	203
Enquiring, Graceful Interaction .....	205
Maturation of the Local YMCA Association in the Presence of an Aging Christian Basis .....	208
God of the Base, Legacy and Loss in the YMCA .....	212
Is the YMCA's de facto Doctrine Sufficient for the Future? .....	218
<b>CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....</b>	<b>221</b>
Doctorateness and Originality.....	221
Contribution to Knowledge.....	223
The Implications of the Research for the English YMCA.....	225
The Implications of the Research for My Work in the YMCA .....	233
Recommendations for the English YMCA to Consider.....	235
<b>REFERENCE LIST .....</b>	<b>238</b>
<b>APPENDICES.....</b>	<b>248</b>
APPENDIX ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW .....	249
APPENDIX TWO: PUBLISHABLE PAPER.....	283
APPENDIX THREE: KEY WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE YMCA .....	326
APPENDIX FOUR: EXTRACT MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION, CHANTRY YMCA.....	328
APPENDIX FIVE: YMCA BYELAW 8 – OUR COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER .....	335
APPENDIX SIX – OVERTLY CHRISTIAN CHARITABLE OBJECTS FOLLOWING THE PARIS BASIS.....	338
APPENDIX SEVEN – PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE .....	340
APPENDIX EIGHT – WORKBOOK MASTER FOR THE FACILITATED GROUPS .....	347

#### **(iv) List of Tables**

	Page
Table One: Map of the Components of the Thesis.	7
Table Two: Review, Refinement and Treatment of the Original Six Propositional Statements.	108
Table Three: Components of my Research Programme.	117
Table Four: Collated Summary of the Sample.	122
Table Five. Berryman's Ambiguity Checklist Compared to YMCA Life Services.	199
Table Six. A Summary of Berryman's Description of Attachment Theory.	210

#### **(v) List of Figures**

	Page
Figure One: The International, National and Local Context of the YMCA.	22
Figure Two: Concepts and Voices Informing My Conceptual Framework.	78
Figure Three: My Triangulated Dialectic Orientated towards Meaning.	94
Figure Four. A representation of Terrien's model of Elusive Presence and Human Response.	214
Figure Five: A representation of Terrien's model of Elusive Presence and Human Response.	214

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**PROFESSIONAL DOCTORATE**

**DISCERNING THE MEANING OF THE CHRISTIAN BASIS IN THE ENGLISH YMCA**

**David Ian Sargent**

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## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **Introduction to the YMCA and its Christian basis.**

The aim of this research was to identify the meaning attached by the English YMCA to its Christian basis in the context of ever changing social, economic and religious environments. In the context of this research, the word *meaning* denotes the “implied or explicit significance, important or worthwhile quality or purpose” (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2013) of the Christian basis. To identify a reasonable position statement, I engaged with voices from within a qualitative, inductive, small scale research project in the English YMCA. My research question is:

### **What Meaning Does the YMCA Attribute to its Christian basis?**

The reference to the YMCA’s Christian basis places the YMCA within a group of organisations that share a range of relationships with the Christian faith. In this introductory section, I define the historical basis of this particular description of the YMCA in relation to other similar organisations with reference to a specific working taxonomic nomenclature. A statement of justification of the originality of this research is also provided together with descriptions of my professional context, given that this research is located within the rubric of a professional doctorate in practical theology.

I report on the pilot study examining individual perspectives on the Christian basis, spirituality and inclusivity in the local member YMCA that employs me. From the plausible propositions arising from the pilot study, I develop a conceptual framework

that builds on the voices identified in the pilot, both apparent and hidden.

The YMCA was created in 1844 in London by a group of young men motivated by a shared desire to express their faith in tangible and practical ways. By 1851, the YMCA with George Williams established as its figurehead and driven by the Social Gospel (Rogers and Blade, 1998, pp. 181-186) had become a worldwide movement; its exponential growth was achieved by people who saw their role as key in “the proclamation of the [Social] Gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship” (Rogers and Blade, 1998, pp. 181-186). However, within the English YMCA today there is ongoing discussion, debate and sharing on a range of subjects including the Christian basis. Much of the discussion around the Christian basis has occurred informally and within local YMCAs. In addition, at a national level various conversations and initiatives have given focus to the Christian basis, including national YMCA Assemblies which have been replaced with occasional national conferences; the YMCA ‘UNIFY’ Christian conference, which is in its second year; and the YMCA movement induction training. The intention of this research is not to ignore existing conversations or to claim to end any controversy, but rather to contribute, as a gift to the English movement, a well-researched position statement that will assist in the conversation at this time of turmoil and change.

The YMCA shares a commonly derived faith heritage with a group of organisations, a number of which originated in a time of Victorian Christian and philanthropic fervour. These organisations are now challenged to make sense of their historical *raison d’être* in a postmodern society. Pallant suggests that “research into faith-based organisations is of interest due to the impact that they have in accessing the poor, the vulnerable and their

Page | 2

needs” (2012, p. 1-8). How these types of organisations respond to this challenge is of contextual interest, but my focus in this research is specifically on the YMCA’s relationship with its Christian basis as mediated through the voices of those who are part of this group.

Organisations with a faith heritage carry their faith-motivated legacies into this postmodern era, but are under pressure to make choices about how they react to the challenge of making sense of their history and of how much legitimacy they attach to religion and spirituality. In theory, these reactions may range from acceptance and continuation through to complete rejection. Mitroff and Denton (1999, p. 7), reporting on their studies of the relationships that organisations have with spirituality, comment that “unless organisations not only acknowledge the soul, but also attempt to deal directly with spiritual concerns in the workplace, they will not meet the challenges of the next millennium”. Their bias is towards recognition of the importance and value of spirituality in organisations. In my research, the starting point is slightly different from theirs: I am addressing an organisation with a history of overt recognition of spirituality and of religion, but in the research, I wish to identify how important these subjects actually are to the YMCA. As James (2009, p. 10) notes, “the majority, particularly Christian ones, have been more reticent. There are good reasons for such organisations to be wary of clarifying their faith identity too tightly. Many fear stirring up trouble by opening up the issue for discussion.” James describes these organisations as faith-based organisations and suggests that “most operate in highly secular, ‘post-Christian’ societies. To a degree they are products of their environments. To survive they must adapt” (James, 2009, p. 10). In my quest to employ a taxonomic means of defining the

Page | 3

YMCA in terms of its faith-based history and its current challenges, I considered a number of models. Sider and Unruh (2004, pp. 119-121) provide a survey of various types of these models. They acknowledge that their literature review on the subject is indebted to Goggin and Orth (2002) and Scott (2002). In the survey, they identify that Monsma's model (1996) is based on a religious practices scale; Jeavons (1997) draws on applied organisational theory; Smith and Sosin (2001) explore how faith-based organisations are connected with denominations or other religious groups; and that Unruh (in press) categorises the religious elements that may be present in a faith-based social service programme.

Sider and Unruh then provide an interesting model of their own incorporating elements from these various typological models to provide an advanced classification of faith-based organisations that focusses on an "inductively derived six fold typology of social service and educational organisations and programmes", and "using analysis of expressive, explicitly religious characteristics" (2004, pp. 119-121). Based on their religious characteristics, faith-based organisations are classified as faith-permeated (faith is an important component of all roles in the organisation), faith-centred (faith is important at governance and leadership levels), faith-affiliated (where faith is optional for all roles except those with a genuine occupational requirement), faith- background (personal faith position is irrelevant) , faith-secular partnership (faith is relevant in some aspects of delivery and funding and not in others), and secular (faith is not relevant) (2004, p. 110).

This classification system has its merits and will be referenced within my definition of the YMCA, but for my purposes, I needed a classification method that more specifically addresses the transitional changes in organisations that have a history of engagement in faith-based activities, but are nevertheless challenged to make sense of that history in contemporary circumstances.

My research question acknowledges that the YMCA started with a Christian basis, but the question also seeks to identify the nature of this evolution, and specifically of the relationship between the historical faith basis and the organisation's contemporary relationship with its faith basis. It is therefore crucial, within the context of what James refers to as faith-based organisations, to create two additional new terms to more accurately cover this conceptual legacy.

My working taxonomic nomenclature for this group of organisations is limited to that of the *faith legacy organisation* and *displaced faith organisation*. These terms recognise that an organisation is connected to a history of faith. Depending on how the organisation responds to its history will determine its classification. For a faith legacy organisation the remnant of faith is recognisable where legacy is defined as "something left or handed down by a predecessor", (Oxford Online Dictionary, 2013).

The challenge faced by Faith Legacy Organisations lies in their ability to actively engage in discussion and debate about their place in a non-theocratic state such as the UK in which “religious and irreligious freedoms are protected” (Addison, 2009, p. 3). In other words, this type of organisation is in transition. Depending on their responses they may become either a *faith based organisation* or a *displaced faith organisation*.

A *faith-based organisation* is one that actively and overtly embraces its faith basis as the most significant motivation for its work. A *displaced Faith Organisation* is defined by a decision to actively displace the faith basis to the point where it has no contemporary significance or value. The motivation for its work is therefore to be found elsewhere. This emphasis on a taxonomic system so early in my thesis is necessary because it helps to build the context of my research and also helps to emphasise the nature of my focus, which is located around the dynamic relationship between the YMCA and its Christian basis. I am interested in identifying the historical relationship as well as its meaning in the contemporary charitable environment.

In the section entitled: *Professional and Organisational Context* (see page 13), I provide a historical survey of the development of four organisations that originated within a Christian faith context, namely the YMCA, the YWCA, Barnardo’s Children’s Charity and the Children’s Society. This survey provides a useful means of contrast and comparison to enable me to classify the YMCA in relation to the other three organisations. It also sets the context for the origins of these types of organisations.

## Mapping the Research Journey

In this section, I provide an outline of the various steps and activities of my research process for the sake of clarity. Table One below provides the overview which I then go on to describe in more detail.

Component of the Thesis	Purpose Within the Research	Means of Achievement	Location in the Thesis
Propositional statement.	To articulate and develop my initial understanding of a gap in knowledge.	Reflection on my position in the YMCA.	Chapter Two, page 75.
Historical survey.	To locate the YMCA and its faith basis within its historical context.	Exploration of evolutionary differences between faith-based organisations.	Chapter One, page 29.
Pilot study.	To research my initial propositions about the gap in knowledge within my immediate place of work.	Questionnaire-led interviews.	Chapter Three, page 97.
Facilitated groups.	To explore the meanings attributed to the Christian basis.	Engagement with two facilitated self-selected groups.	Chapter Four, page 134.
Field visits.	To identify how local member YMCAs make sense of the Christian basis within the context of local service delivery.	Visits to local member YMCAs.	Chapter Four, page 137.
Website survey of non-participatory YMCAs.	To identify public motivational statements.	Trawl of the websites of non-responders.	Chapter Four, page 140.
National Charity Commission based survey of charitable objects.	To compare Charity Commission registrations with YMCA statements of purpose.	Search of the Charities Commission website to obtain registration details.	Chapter Four, page 142.
Theological reflection.	To generate themes.	The data was analysed with reference to key voices.	Chapter Five, page 145.

**Table One: Map of the Components of the Thesis.**

The purpose of the propositional statement was to articulate and develop my initial understanding of a gap in knowledge about the YMCA and its Christian basis, which arose from my appointment to a role in the organisation with some responsibility for ensuring that the Christian basis is enacted. It was achieved through reflection on my position in the YMCA and my understanding of the issues that I perceived to have arisen in this local YMCA and in my appointment.

The historical survey was designed to locate the YMCA and its faith basis within its historical context for the purpose of describing the contemporary position. It also facilitated further development of the propositional statement and research question. The historical survey helped to identify the historical context of the YMCA's Christian basis as well as the relationship between the two. Furthermore, it enabled me to explore evolutionary differences between faith-based organisations.

The pilot study provided an opportunity to research my initial propositions about the knowledge gap within my immediate place of work. I conducted questionnaire-led interviews with a cross-section of people within a local member YMCA in Rotherham which employs me directly. This approach provided the initial link between the propositions: an inductive research programme and the requirements of the professional doctorate. Analysis of the data from the pilot study allowed me to review and refine the original proposition and research question in preparation for further research.



I conducted two facilitated self-selected groups and discussions were facilitated by workbooks which were recorded and transcribed. These facilitated groups helped me to explore the meanings attributed to the Christian basis with people from a cross-section of the YMCA's staff, leadership and governance.

In the field visits, I was able to identify how participating local member YMCAs make sense of the Christian basis within the context of local service delivery. The field visits were intended to identify the successes and challenges in the enactment of the Christian basis. Local YMCAs were accessed by means of visits to engage with staff, managers and board members in order to record local expressions of the Christian basis.

The website survey of non participatory YMCAs enabled me to identify any statements that the sample group of YMCAs present to the public about their local enactment of the Christian basis. This, in turn, helped me to identify what the local YMCAs define as their key motivational statements in support of local delivery.

The national Charity Commission based survey of charitable objects enabled me to compare charity registrations of local YMCAs lodged with the Charity Commission with their own website statements for the purpose of identifying similarities and differences.

This was achieved through the identification of each charity registration number using a combination of reference to the YMCA England website and a general internet search.

The YMCA England website identified the name of the local member YMCA but not necessarily its charity registration number. The general internet search identified specific local YMCA websites and their registration number, which enabled a search of the Charities Commission website to obtain registration details.

The theological reflection helped me to generate themes from the data for the purposes of building a deeper understanding of the relationship that the participants have with the Christian basis. The data was analysed with reference to key voices within the data and in literature that helped to model the themes. In particular, I refer to Cameron et al. (2010) and their Four Voices of Theology (2010, pp. 53-56): normative theology, formal theology, espoused theology and operant theology. I suggest that the affinities describe the relationship that participants have with the YMCA's operant theology.

### **Justification of the Originality of the Research.**

The initial literature review contained in Appendix One addressed my early, initial assumption that the YMCA needed to focus on meeting the spiritual needs of young people. My assumption was based on the perception that the YMCA, its governance and leadership were all in a position of uniform and harmonious agreement on how to deliver the Christian basis, part of which is meeting spiritual needs.

However, I found out through the pilot study, reported later, that spiritual needs are not well catered for in one local YMCA and following the literature review and a period of reflection, the specific issue of interest became clearer. This limited means of addressing spiritual need might be indicative of the challenges faced at a governance and leadership level in the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis.

This section focusses on the exploration of the workplace context as a requirement of the professional doctorate. I suggest that the conversation surrounding the Christian basis has been ongoing informally for many years in the YMCA, but that there are few

Page | 10

academically rigorous studies that focus specifically on it. As a managerial leader within one YMCA, I liaise with colleagues across the country and, in so doing, have over time acquired a sense that there are a range of voices in the YMCA whose messages, descriptions of practice and contribution to the conversation are relatively untapped and not easily available to the research community. Trafford and Leshem (2008, p. 41) note that developing such “familiarity with practice” can result in a situation where a “hunch, assumption, observations and direct knowledge suggest a lack of satisfactory explanations” about why the Christian basis is addressed in the way it is.

I am particularly interested in identifying evidence to describe the relationship between the YMCA and its Christian basis. The need for a better understanding of the Christian basis was identified at a national level within the YMCA movement in 2008. The then resident National Secretary wrote in an open letter to the YMCA:

“The Movement has requested that YMCA England looks to develop a Christian Spiritual Development Strategy to ensure that this is as important to the YMCA as our DNA is to human life. We want a strategy that will ensure that Christian Spiritual Development is evident in all that we do” (Sarkis, 2008).

In response, a number of initiatives have been forthcoming. Up to 2011 and prior to restructuring, the YMCA in England was served by regional executive officers, who depending on their personal faith positions, attempted with varying degrees of success to foster a sense of the need to share in the common Christian identity at a regional level. The Midland region and some southern areas were particularly successful in producing Christian Spirituality Toolkit Workbooks and holding common days of prayer. YMCA England then restructured and created a dedicated role for Christian Spiritual

Development. In 2012, a Christian Mission Conference entitled 'UNIFY' was organised and was well attended. 'UNIFY' aimed to inspire and energise the Christian emphasis of YMCAs across Europe. It seems that some YMCAs around the country are taking the Christian basis seriously, but this is by no means a national picture.

In some parts of the country, the Christian basis is largely left to local interpretation. The problem of helping local member YMCA Associations to enact the Christian basis goes back to the early days of the organisation. Hodder-Williams (2012, p. 188) notes that in 1855, only ten years after the creation of the YMCA, George Williams was already acting to ensure that the Christian basis was applied universally because several Associations were "departing from the first principles, while others were in a more or less moribund condition, or had become institutions existing merely for the advancement of education and good fellowship".

In 1970, the YMCA National Commission reported that "the Christian purpose and the Movement, together with its expression today, was therefore the constant concern of the Commission" (Portal, 1970, p. 7) and that "evidence before the Commission shows that the traditional form of evangelism as a dynamic policy has largely ground to a halt within the YMCA" (Portal, 1970, p. 22). Acceptance of the Christian basis and its implications may well have fluctuated over the years, but I contend that the current crisis has the potential to be the most severe. In my research statement, I note that "the YMCA in England is a microcosmic representation of English society, enriched with variety and diversity". If this is true and the YMCA is following contemporary societal trends, then the drop in Church attendance of around 41 percent since 1980 may be

Page | 12

symptomatic of a reduction in Christian praxis in England at a time when the world wide trend is for an increase in Church attendance (WhyChurch?, 2012). The same is true of the YMCAs in England.

By 1938, the YMCA in England had grown to hold 500 Associations with 83 thousand members and 300 full time paid Secretaries. By 2004, the 500 Associations had dropped to 138. At the time of writing up this research (2012) the YMCA movement in England had 121 local member associations. The trend is downwards and part of this is due to financial pressure and the challenge of local sustainability. Therefore, the crisis is one of a diminishing English movement, with the possibility of a diminishing proportion of practising Christians.

Not all YMCAs in England appoint senior managers or Chief Executive Officers who are practising Christians. Often, the Christian element is not specified as a genuine occupational requirement for fear of it generating exclusivity. However, this may well result in the untenable situation of the board of trustees holding to the Christian basis, but without any means of application because no managerial staff share in those beliefs. One analogy would be a parochial Church Council attempting to run a church by appointing a secular manager as opposed to a minister. Another might be where Church schools appoint non-Christian heads and senior staff. An example of where the YMCA has tried to address this issue is in the Eastern Region where in 2010 to 2012 funding from the Jerusalem Trust enabled YMCAs to train board members in how to recruit effectively.

## **PROFESSIONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL CONTEXT**

My research has been conducted within the framework of a professional doctorate; it is necessary therefore, in this section, to explain the relationship between my appointment to the YMCA and the drivers for this research. I became aware of these at the time of my appointment and subsequently during my work in the YMCA.

In joining the YMCA, I naively expected to be entering an environment where almost every action was enriched and validated through careful, considered and thoughtful Christian reflection. I had built up an image of the YMCA which was a theoretical, but simplistic model. The reality was that I found myself working for an organisation grappling with the same everyday issues and challenges that any other faith-based organisation might have to grapple with: the dilemma of interpreting faith in the daily workings of the organisation. Typical of the daily reality in these types of organisations, were the constant struggles in attempting to find enough money to maintain a positive cash flow, usually set against ever growing needs presented by clients. Then there was the sense of failure when funding bids were unsuccessful and the day when, for example, the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills would conduct an inspection, or the contract for housing services was reviewed and reduced. The list of challenges continues to grow for YMCAs and yet in the midst of this is the built-in expectation that everyone will be able to cope because the YMCA is a Christian-based organisation.

I was appointed subject to compliance with the GOR under the Equalities Act 2010, to be a practising Christian. In the explanatory notes to the Act, it is noted that the requirement must be crucial to the post and not merely one of several important factors. Even if possessing a particular characteristic is an occupational requirement, the employer must still show that applying the requirement is a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim. The advertisement and job description required me to express my Christian faith in my work, not as one of a number of attributes, but as a crucial and proportionate part in achieving the mission, which in the YMCA is described in the charitable objects registered with the Charities Commission. Nevertheless, during my induction and thereafter, no formal expectations were made known to me regarding the exercise of my role within the Christian basis beyond the requirements located within my job description and person specification. These were primarily to provide Christian leadership.

As I began to develop in my role I realised that in order to fulfil the GOR I would need to identify the relationship between the YMCA's Christian basis and the expectations that YMCA stakeholders placed upon my role. In discussing this issue with staff and with the board, it became apparent that not only did my job description not give any means of interpretation to help me work out how to achieve my role, but neither could the board nor YMCA England provide a codified instruction or something similar. As part of my induction, I spent time with other YMCAs in Yorkshire including Barnsley, Doncaster and Halifax. Each of these appeared to have little advice to offer me on the Christian basis, but they were able to help me with the managerial and financial elements of running a YMCA.

In attempting to define the nature of the Christian emphasis within my role as CEO in the YMCA, I referenced the governing documents, namely the Memorandum of Understanding and Articles of Association (see Appendix Three). These contain the six charitable objects which govern the work of the YMCA. The following charitable objects were reproduced from one version of the YMCA's Memorandum and Articles of Association:

- i. "To unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom.
- ii. To lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in Him.
- iii. To provide or assist in the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life.
- iv. To provide or assist in the provision of education for persons of all ages with the object of developing their physical, mental or spiritual capacities.
- v. To relieve or assist in the relief of persons of all ages who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.
- vi. To provide residential accommodation for persons of all ages who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances" (Chantry YMCA, 2005).

Upon reading these documents I began to identify an interesting difference between the requirements of the first two charitable objects with their overt focus on Christian faith activities and what appeared to be a lack of systematic, planned or tangible means of achieving those activities. This was evidenced in how my role was structured with its emphasis on its Christian GOR and yet without any shared understanding in the YMCA of how such a role ought to be worked out in practice.



In considering the remaining four charitable objects, which are generic and without any overt reference to faith, I also began to realise that the staff and volunteers might be motivated by various reasons of their own for working in the YMCA which would locate well in these four charitable objects. While the Christian basis was clearly intended to be of significance in my role and therefore a key motivational factor in my decision to work in the YMCA, I did not know what key motivations were inherent in the roles of others. For instance, was I expected to deliver the YMCA's Christian basis locally on my own with direction from the board or was I supposed to facilitate the delivery of the Christian basis together with other people in the organisation? This caused me to question the nature of the relationship between my role and other YMCA roles. Under the four remaining non-religious charitable objects, education was referenced and specifically, spiritual education. I could easily identify overt education programmes that delivered skills training and qualifications. For example, a young person might undertake a National Vocational Qualification in Retail through a YMCA charity retail outlet. However, I could not easily identify an educational programme that delivered overtly on spiritual matters. This led me to question what the YMCA defined as *spirituality*. Was it appropriate to assume that an organisation delivering on spiritual education would accept the validity of spirituality and would therefore have a live form of conversation about spirituality?

As an organisational leader, I was well informed on the legislative and regulatory frameworks that govern organisational policy including equality and inclusivity. Within the context of my research it seemed important to consider the GOR within the context of equality and inclusivity as these two elements were clearly referenced in the

organisation's policies. In making sense of the GOR and Christian basis I accessed information from the National Society, a Church of England body that promotes and resources Church of England schools. I found that the National Society provides an advanced means of testing the application in school of what they refer to as "Distinctly Christian Character" (National Society, 2012 and Church of England, 2013). The National Society provides a "Framework for Inspection and a Self-Evaluation Toolkit". Both are designed to test the distinctive nature of church schools thereby providing guidance on how to ensure that the Christian emphasis is integral.

I needed to explore the YMCA's approach to meeting the needs and expectations of clients within an organisational context that appeared to accept spiritual and non-spiritual, Christian and non-Christian, and secular and faith-based motivations. I needed to understand how this was to be achieved under the authority of the Christian basis while also placing a direct expectation on me to provide overt Christian leadership. In reflecting on the various aspects of the issues related to my role, I was able to identify the broad element of interest as the Christian basis in the YMCA.

Amidst the challenges typically associated with a new job, I started to mentally audit what my employing YMCA was delivering against its charitable registration. I also attempted to identify what other YMCAs were doing that set them apart as YMCAs. I sought to informally identify common agreed expressions and practices (Howe in Denzin and Giardina, 2011, pp. 118-123) that might give an indication of what made the English part of the YMCA movement unique. However, in conversation with colleagues from other YMCAs, what I identified was much diversity and variety. The diversity in services

Page | 18

became apparent – each and every YMCA is unique with a specific service set that has evolved over time in response to a peculiar local mixture of need, abilities, capacities and resource availability. I discussed this with the regional executive officer and with the chair of the YMCA in Rotherham, and I proposed to study the subject in more detail. The Board and the Regional Office were supportive of a doctoral research programme because they felt that that my personal reflections made sense in terms of the YMCA's situation and that research might be able to contribute something to this national conversation.

During a period of reflection, it became apparent that I needed to make sense of the collective socio-organisational context of the YMCA. Howe, in agreement with Searle in Denzin and Giardina, defines this social context as “ an exhibition of collective intentionality” which is the result of “beings cooperate[ing] in the pursuit of goals” (2011, p. 121). The question that I was beginning to formulate concerned what YMCA people had agreed to do and to be while in cooperative association that would demonstrate the unique Christian basis of the YMCA. The type of research that I would undertake would fit within the bounds of the epistemological paradigm focussed on social causal factors and therefore, it would be interpretive. Howe once again with reference to Searle et al., defines this as a type of intentional conception, namely the “I-explanation-establishing and accounting for ordered patterns of human behaviour in terms of rule-governed institutions and practices” (2011, p. 123). He follows with an explanation of how this accounting takes place starting with identification “of the social (including institutional) facts assigned by meaning functions by a given social group and then explaining how members of that group follow or track the associated rules”.

The history of the YMCA, juxtaposed with the reality of contemporary organisational activity together with the associative, collaborative interactions that generated both the past historical context and the contemporary organisational context, were important starting points for my research. In the next section, I provide a historical synopsis with the intention not simply to provide a historical account of the YMCA's origins, but rather to develop a succinct schema that shows how the YMCA's history developed and delivered the faith legacy pertinent to this research.

### **The Organisational Context of the Research**

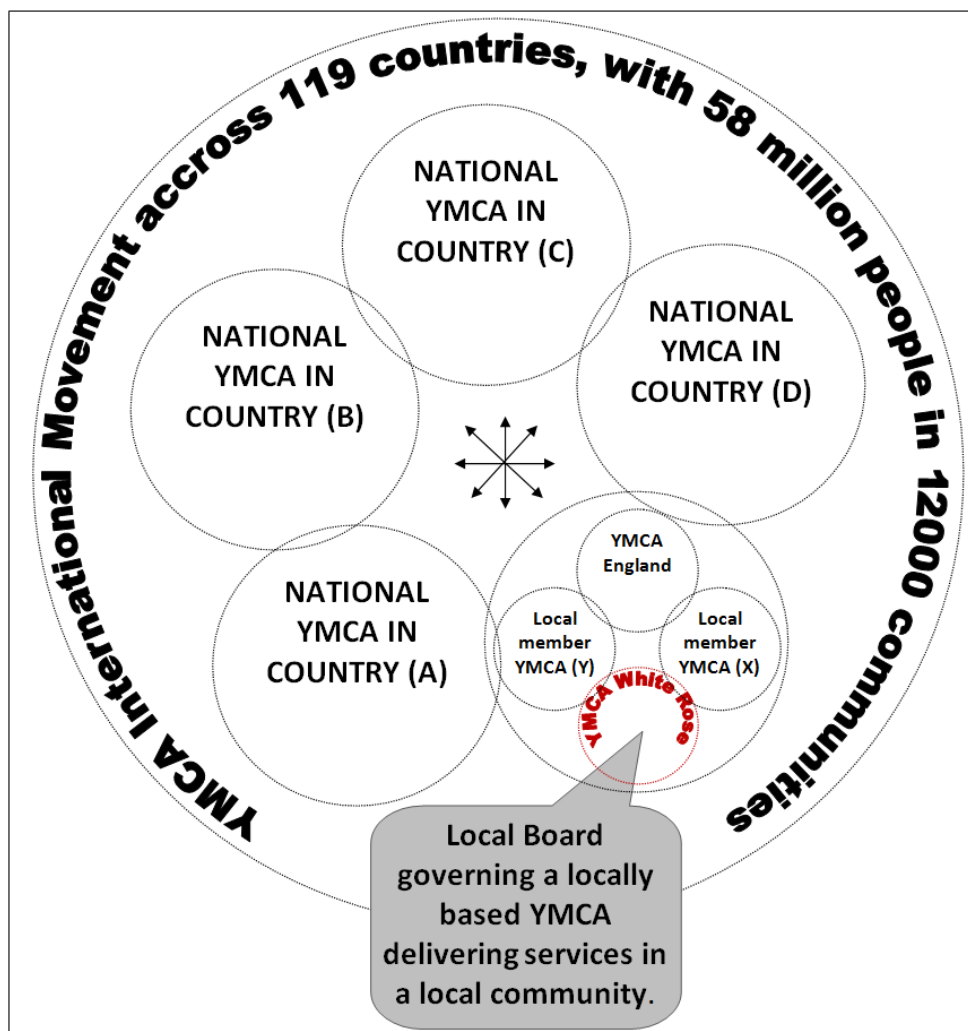
In this section, I describe the YMCA movement in order to establish the research boundaries including its relationship with the Church. This is because the YMCA's relationship with the Christian faith by definition must denote a relationship with the Church. I have specifically chosen to research the YMCA in England because this is where I work. The YMCA is a complex and large international grouping of organisations. To seek answers to my research question in the context of the whole international movement would require significantly more resources and time.

The research originates with me at a personal level, expanding to a local level as a pilot in one local member YMCA because this is the smallest legally constituted unit of the whole international YMCA movement. The research then expands out from this radially, as small-scale research to generate reasonable propositions for the YMCA in England to consider, followed by a return to my personal context as I make sense of the data in order to create meaning. My decision to set the research boundary around the English

YMCA is based on a set of criteria: a) the fundamental structure and model of the YMCA; b) resource implications; c) authority and decision-making processes within the YMCA; and d) my research design.

The YMCA's international superstructure is both a source of strength and a potential limiting factor. In theory, the federated nature should give the YMCA movement financial resilience to a significant degree by compartmentalising financial risk and limiting its effects to a local level. However, the extended and brokered power structures make consensus building a difficult imperative to achieve for any decisions that affect any more than one individual YMCA. An example of such a consensus is the shared responsibility for the pension fund arrangements in England where all participating YMCAs in England jointly share the liability.

The YMCA as an international movement was originally modelled on the structure of a local association. Its internal associations and networks of external relationships with other local member YMCAs are located in a national and international context. The growth of the YMCA as an international movement was always going to rely on collaboration in decision-making and locally resourced delivery; which is the YMCA model set by George Williams and the founding YMCA members. Figure One (below) illustrates the international, national and local nature of the YMCA movement.



**Figure One: The International, National and Local Context of the YMCA.**

The age of the YMCA and its international success are a testament to the effectiveness of the model. The YMCA has outlived and outgrown many corporate profit based organisations over the last one hundred and sixty eight years. The early development and growth was impressive. Over the first six months from inception in 1844, the twelve members grew to one hundred and sixty one, a growth factor of eleven fold. Over the next year, membership grew eight fold. From 1855, over the next forty years, membership increased by four hundred and sixteen fold (Hodder –Williams 2012, pp. 130-279) and between 1895 and 2012, membership increased by ninety fold. Over that time the YMCA grew to be the single biggest youth movement in the world with fifty eight million members worldwide (World Alliance of YMCAs, 2010).

Around the world, there are variations in the application of the YMCA model, for example, the German National Association is a union of thirteen independent member associations, eleven of which are regional YMCA movements, the other two being the Urban YMCAs and the *Christian Youth Village* which works nationwide (CVJM, 2012). Nevertheless, the most common model is in the formation of local YMCAs known as Member Associations which is critical to the success of the YMCA's strategy. It means that governance; risk and localism are all prioritised and dispersed. The local member association has its own governance; financial arrangements and responsibility for delivery of programmes against its registered Charitable Objectives. Each member YMCA is affiliated to its National YMCA, usually in return for an annual subscription. Through an agreed electoral process, local member associations are called to provide members to the National Board which then represents the particular country at a national and international level. In England the national body is known as YMCA England. The relationship between YMCA England and the Member Associations is important where both are accountable to each other and to the world wide movement. YMCA England describes its role as supporting and representing the YMCAs in England helping them transform communities (YMCA England, 2013a).

It seems to me that there are considerations of first importance, and of secondary importance within the governance arrangements of the YMCA movement as a whole. These considerations are no invention of mine, but are the product of more than a century and a half's worth of reflection, collaboration and decision making at the national and international levels of the YMCA. Considerations of first importance, which are defined in my view by the importance that was attached to them by the founders,

Page | 23

include (as a non exhaustive list) the prioritisation of young people, the Christian basis and the federal structure. Considerations of secondary importance are those items which were indicated as such by the founders, or were added later as augmentations to the considerations of first importance. These might include local autonomy and definitions of types of service.

In principle, this means that any individual YMCA seeking to change the essence of what it is to be a YMCA should do so through reference to the overall movement. Decisions of this type are achieved via the National Boards acting as representatives at an International level. It means, for example, that the Christian basis might be regarded by some as non-negotiable and not to be relegated in lieu of restructuring. It also means that financial needs in YMCAs should be sensitively balanced against service delivery. George Williams and other founders were acutely aware of the financial burden of running the YMCA (Hodder-Williams, 2012, pp. 182-184), but at no time did they think to remove or alter those things of first importance in the YMCA, including the Christian basis, in order to obtain additional financial support or credibility. They did exercise a great deal of faith and, in equal measure; they strove to achieve economies and to provide their own resources.

The unit of analysis for the main body of research, my thesis, is a set of member YMCAs because: a) it is from within this context that I was able to observe approaches to my subject material and b) the local member YMCA represents the smallest legally constituted unit within the YMCA movement where governance and autonomy exists.



### **What is the YMCA's Relationship with the Church and Local Congregations?**

The origin of the YMCA has its roots in the Christian faith as expressed by a small group of people who sought to show their faith through the YMCA. An important part of their Christian service was achieved through the conception, development and expansion of the YMCA. They did this as part of an extension of the continuum of Christian service emanating from their local congregations. For example, Hodder-Williams notes that George Williams, widely considered to be a key founder of the YMCA movement, did upon his conversion to Christianity find that his "whole being was tuned" to the care of others and that from then on "he lived not unto himself, but to the glory of God in the service of men". (2012, p. 29). Out of this conversion experienced in a church came a desire to serve others and out of that desire the YMCA was born. Therefore, within the context of this research an understanding of the relationship between the YMCA and the Church, including its local congregations is helpful.

This reference to the origin of the YMCA emphasises the necessity of describing the relationship between the YMCA and the Church. While this question is not central to my research it is part of the informing mix of sources and so I will briefly describe the evolution of my understanding of the relationship. My initial naive understanding of the relationship was that the YMCA might be a newer form of the Church working specifically with young people. This was based on the limited understanding of what the Church and YMCA each *does*. However, my developed understanding is based on not only what the church and YMCA each *does*, but also on what the church and YMCA each *is*.

In consideration of what the Church and YMCA each *does* the purpose of the Church is twofold. The Church assembles for the purpose of bringing each member to spiritual maturity (Ephesians 4:13). The Church reaches out to spread the love of Christ and the Gospel message to unbelievers in the world (Matthew 28:18-20). This is the Great Commission. The Church demonstrates the love of Christ to the world. Therefore, the purpose of the Church is to minister to believers and unbelievers and a portion of this ministry is to be achieved through service.

The word “Church” as rendered in the New Testament comes from the Greek term *Ecclesia*. Emil Brunner, a Swiss Protestant theologian who worked with the YMCA after the Second World War, suggested that the *Ecclesia* is the “fellowship of Christian Believers” (1952, p. 10). Louthian and Miller (1994, p. 1) note from a legal perspective that “the word *church* implies that an otherwise qualified organisation brings people together as the principle means of accomplishing its exempt purpose” and that “to be a church a religious organisation must engage in the administration of sacerdotal functions and the conduct of religious worship in accordance with the tenets and practices of a particular religious body”. These tenets and practices include the sharing of the sacraments, which in certain denominations can only be administered by the ordained clergy.

This focus on the sharing of the sacraments denotes an important difference between what the Church does and what the YMCA does. In England the YMCA is generally not staffed by ordained ministers, but rather by managers and trustees, some of whom might be trained in theology. The YMCA does not administer the sacraments and in most

Page | 26

cases would not be able to do so. This is because most senior roles in the English YMCA do not require ordained applicants, but YMCAs instead seek to appoint individuals who wish to express their faith in association with other staff and trustees in the YMCA in the service of young people. Service to those in need is certainly part of both the Church's and the YMCA's calling, but as noted earlier the Church is also called to administer the sacraments. This visible administration of the sacraments in the Church is according to Brunner, part of the visible Church i.e. *externum subsidium fidei*, "an external means of salvation" (1952, p. 9), whereas the YMCA is part of that group of believers who, in part, form the *Ecclesia* or wider and largely invisible body of believers simply acting in service to others.

Having considered what the YMCA and the Church each does I now consider what the Church *is* and what the YMCA *is*. I am of the view that the Church is called by God to live as his people under the authority of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:22-23). The historical group of believers or the *Body of Christ* took form as described in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost and thereafter spread out widely in the centuries that followed and formed the Church.

While the YMCA is almost 170 years old it did not originate with the Church and will not endure through history and beyond in the same way that the Church will. The YMCA is an organisation that arose from within the *Ecclesia* as a means of service to young people. The YMCA is one of a number of organisations formed in the mid-Victorian period of English history in response to the call to enact the "Social Gospel", which is usually used to describe a Protestant Christian intellectual movement that came to

Page | 27

prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013b).

I suggest therefore that the YMCA is one of many organised means by and through which the Church undertakes its works of service. The YMCA's calling is as a servant of and friend to the Church, meeting needs in various ways thereby helping to extend the Church's reach into the world.

The YMCA's federated structure lends itself to the creation of local relationships and partnerships. This is true for local relationships between churches and YMCAs. There is a strong history in the YMCA of local congregations being involved in the local YMCA. Examples exist of close relationships between local YMCA boards and clergy. For example, in the YMCA that employs me the Bishop of Sheffield and the Methodist Superintendent are both Vice Presidents. Ministers from various congregations have served as board members over the years.

As a result of taking all of the above considerations into account and through a multi-method approach, I developed methods to gather data through different modes including focus groups, interviews and field visits. I facilitated written and spoken elements which were recorded in workbooks and audio recordings respectively. This research is central to this doctoral thesis.

## **Origins in Conversation with other Similar Organisations**

In this next section I purposefully devote significant attention to the YMCA's historical development in relation to a small number of other organisations with similar origins because I intend to demonstrate the ways in which faith-based organisations can develop and change over time in response to internal and external factors. In this section I demonstrate that faith-based organisations with similar original intentions can meet the challenges inherent in contemporary contexts by responding and reacting in different ways. My approach identifies the dynamic nature of development in faith-based organisations.

The YMCA originated at a time in the history of the United Kingdom when, as Evans (BBC, 2011) notes, "civic identity and civic engagement were more powerful forces in Victorian than in early 20th-century Britain". In the mid to late-Victorian period, many Christian faith-based charities were born. Evans (BBC, 2011) reports that this period "saw the formation of the Society for the Relief of Distress, the Peabody Trust, Barnardo's Homes and the Charity Organisation Society and Christian gentlemen considered it a duty to make legacies to worthy causes". These organisations, in diverse circumstances, tended to focus on particular needs in society and especially on poverty and behaviours that the Church and Christians at the time might have had concerns about. For example, the Salvation Army, started in London by William Booth in 1865, and known initially as the 'Christian Mission', focussed on evangelising the poor and particularly addressing the abuse of gin as a major cause of poverty.

From a chronological perspective, a number of notable Christian faith-based charities were launched during the same period as the YMCA (1844), among them÷ the YWCA (1855), Barnardo's Homes (1867) and the Children's Society (1881). As a means of making sense of how the YMCA has engaged with its Christian basis over the last 169 years, I will develop a comparative schema to include these four organisations in terms of their origins, early development, establishment, expansion and contemporary position.

On Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 1844, a group of young men led by George Williams met in bedroom No. 14 of Messrs. Hitchcock and Rogers, Drapers, St Paul's Churchyard, London and they founded the YMCA. Their objective was the "improvement of the spiritual condition of the young men engaged in houses of business, by the formation of Bible classes, family and social prayer meetings, mutual improvement societies, or any other spiritual agency" (World Alliance of YMCAs, 2010) and (Hodder-Williams, 1906, pp. 127-132). Hodder-Williams (1906, p. 63) also notes that Williams was motivated as a young man of faith, as were others in the group and this was the primary driver in their collaboration and dedication to this venture.

By way of a comparison, Thomas Barnardo, inspired by his Christian faith, launched a programme of pioneering childcare work in the late 1860s. In his own words "the homes have from the beginning been conducted on definitely religious lines. They are Christian institutions, carried on in the spirit of the Gospel (and) no other religious instruction is afforded than such as is in accordance with the teaching of the Word of God"

(Barnardo's, 2013). Barnardo expected an ecumenical approach to the work of the

charity. Smith quotes Barnardo as noting that "Christian, Protestant and Evangelical is the religious motto of the Association. In its support the members of all Evangelical denominations may, and do, join hands" (2002).

The YWCA movement began in 1855 in Great Britain through the vision of two women, Mary Jane Kinnaird and Emma Roberts (YWCA, 2013). There was no direct developmental relationship between the YWCA and YMCA. From the Warwick University YWCA Archive (YWCA, 1982) it is noted that "the whole character of the work from the outset was essentially religious" and that "in 1855 Miss Emma Roberts formed a Prayer Union with 23 friends to help girls through intercessory prayer". The charity's founding objects were set "to eliminate all forms of disadvantage experienced by young women, to encourage their social, physical, spiritual and personal development and to promote their leadership and participation in society" (Charity Commission, 2013).

In 1881, Edward Rudolf, a young Sunday school teacher and civil servant in South London, was deeply affected by the poverty that he witnessed among children in London (Children's Society, 2013a). He approached the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Archibald Tait, for assistance and asked him to become the President of the Society. He formally agreed on 24<sup>th</sup> August 1881. From this date on the Society became an officially recognised organisation under the auspices of the Church of England. It was known as the Church of England Central Home for Waifs and Strays.

Later this organisation became known as the Children's Society. Rudolf wanted children to be part of their local community and to care for and support them and to promote their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual development in accordance with the principles of the Church of England.

From these brief accounts, it is noteworthy that all these organisations originated in the latter half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and were all conceived by people motivated by their Christian faith and a desire to apply themselves practically and philanthropically to aid those in need. All were built on the overt mixing of faith and action and it is quite possible that staff, volunteers and beneficiaries would all have participated in Christian prayers and other faith-based activities. All these organisations tended to share a view of the *holistic model of well-being*, in which spiritual life was tied into other parts of existence including the physical, moral, social and personal aspects of personhood. None of these organisations assumed that spiritual well-being was something separate. They all shared a core view of *practical* Christianity as key to improving people's lives.

Evangelisation was not considered to be a separate activity, but one integrated into the care they provided. None of these organisations evangelised exclusively through preaching. Rather, they sought to address whatever needs they could and woven into their interactions would be the sharing of the Gospel message. These motivations and shared views resonate with this research project in its quest to explain the significance of the YMCA's Christian basis within the context of practical theology.



## Early Development

In the period immediately following their creation, these four organisations sought to develop and establish their governance structures, their *modus operandi* and to extend their range of operation. This next section provides a brief overview of progress with comments where available from sources on how the Christian faith basis was developed.

In the early stages of development, the YMCA sought to define a organisational form that would achieve the intentions of the founders. Hodder- Williams notes that “the first months of the Association’s existence were marked by many signs of steady progress” (2012, p. 128). In July 1844 a meeting of the fledgling YMCA was attended by 12 young men and a circular was sent out informing the public that “a society is now formed”. From that time attendances at YMCA meetings began to grow and the November 1844 meeting was attended by 161 young men (2012, p. 115).

It is clear from his report that this initial set of aims was built around a model that focussed on the spiritual condition of young men with an expectation that they would become members of the Association. The expectation included church attendance to qualify as members and the payment of a joining fee for admittance into the YMCA. They were required to bring “unsaved” friends to the meetings, which gives a very specific indication of the expectations set within the early Association. The format and structure appears to be disposed towards a mission approach within a structure reminiscent of the missionary societies set up in London by David Nasmyth and others a decade before (Binfield, 1973, p. 153).

Over the period of 1845 to 1846, the YMCA grew on a number of fronts. The number of local associations increased around London; attendances at tea meetings rose; and in December 1845, success in the delivery of Bible classes was recorded in the YMCA's publication, the *Occasional Papers*. This dual emphasis on the spiritual and mental elements was not by accident. Wort cites Z. S. Willis' *The YMCA and Adult Education* noting that the original object of the Association of "the improvement of the spiritual condition of young men" was changed very early to "the improvement of the spiritual *and mental* condition of young men" (1944, p. 11).

It seems that the YMCA at the outset focussed on prayer, evangelism through friendship and education. This, if true, would make the early YMCA a very different organisation from the contemporary one with its focus on meeting a wide range of needs. However, this does not entirely represent the whole image of the YMCA's early work. For example, by 1845, a year after the birth of the YMCA, "the appointment of Mr. Tarlton as first paid secretary was announced" (Hodder-Williams, 1906, p. 133). His role, like that of secretaries to follow was to organise a range of activities to meet needs, but it seems that the initial emphasis was often on evangelism.

In 1870, Barnardo opened his first home for boys in Stepney Causeway. He regularly went out at night into the slum district to find destitute boys. He spent time talking with young people on the streets trying to share the Gospel with them (Smith, 2002).

Following the death of a boy who had been turned away from the home one evening because it was full, Barnardo insisted that a sign be placed above the home stating

“No Destitute Child Ever Refused Admission”. Barnardo later opened the Girl’s Village Home in Barkingside, a collection of cottages around a green, which housed 1,500 girls. By the time a child left Barnardo’s they were expected to make their own way in the world – the girls were equipped with domestic skills and the boys learnt a craft or trade (Barnardo’s, 2013).

Barnardo attempted to create an environment in which young people could learn to support themselves in terms of trade, but also in their spiritual development. Rose records that “he built workshops, fitted workrooms, started a city messenger’s brigade, brushmaking and boot-making departments and a tract department for the sale of improving literature” (1987, p. 40). He opened up a “new branch of the ragged school in Salmon Lane and employed twenty four ‘staff’ including a cook, drill-master, trade manager and two schoolmasters in the home and teachers, door-keepers and a sick visitor and a Bible woman in the mission” (1987, p. 40). The reference to a “Bible woman” is more significant than it at first appears. Prochaska records this role as having been initiated at the time in various organisations by Ranyard as being a “missionary cum social worker, a working class woman drawn from the neighbourhood to be canvassed, was to provide the missing link between the poorest families and their social superiors. Given three month’s training in the poor law, hygiene, and Scripture. Mrs Ranyard’s agents sought to turn the city’s outcast population into respectable, independent citizens through an invigoration of family life” (1988, pp. 48-49).

The early YWCA groups were influenced by the profound social effects of the Industrial Revolution on the lives of young women, especially in cities. From 1855, projects spread widely throughout the country from the North of Scotland to the South of England. Local YWCA clubs provided young women with a range of services including accommodation, educational and vocational classes, prayer circles and social gatherings. From the beginning, the emphasis of the YWCA was on all-round development in mind, body and spirit (YWCA, 2013).

The Children's Society also expanded rapidly. In December 1881, a house in Friern Road, East Dulwich in South London was rented with the intention of it becoming the first home. In January 1882 a house in Clapton, London was rented and set up as the first boy's home. The first children were received into the Society's care on 14<sup>th</sup> February 1882. The model was of "a small family group or cottage homes, each with around ten children aged between five and 14, with a master and matron to act as parents and spiritual mentors" (Children's Society, 2013a).

The early developmental history of the four organisations demonstrates a drive towards expansion and establishment. Many of the founders were still heavily involved and this ensured that the objectives were carried through this early period. The personal Christian faith of each of the founders played a significant motivational role and the importance of Christian-based activities is hinted at or directly referenced in available sources. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge that in the early stages of development these four organisations were faith-based and were operating from a motivational foundation that was overtly located in a Christian Victorian context of need

Page | 36

in society and need in the churches that were grappling with the challenge of becoming more practically oriented in addition to observance. This drive by Christians towards addressing problems such as poverty, slums, poor nutrition and education, alcoholism, crime and war became known by the phrase “Social Gospel”, which is usually used to describe a Protestant Christian intellectual movement that came to prominence in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013b).

## **Establishment and Expansion**

Following an early period of development these four Faith-based organisations extended their reach and significance. At least part of this expansion would have been due to the effectiveness of the work, but growth may also have occurred due to the determined focus of the leadership in each organisation, coupled with the benefits of international trade promoted during the Victorian era. For the YMCA and YWCA this involved international expansion and for the Children's Society it was further expansion within the United Kingdom. For Barnardo's this period resulted in the development of international activities and relationships that later became a source of embarrassment to the organisation. In this next section this period is described in relation to the drivers for expansionist growth.

By 1851, the YMCA, driven by the Social Gospel (Rogers and Blade, 1998, pp. 181-186) and aided by international trade links, had begun the journey towards becoming a worldwide movement; its exponential growth was achieved by people who saw their role as key in "the proclamation of the (Social) Gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship" (Rogers and Blade, 1998, pp. 181).

On 19<sup>th</sup> August 1855, the first international conference was held in Paris attended by 97 representatives from six countries. At this meeting emphasis was given to "personal, evangelical and living Christianity" coupled with liberty for local associations to work out the practicalities of "achieving mutual edification and the evangelisation of young men." (Wort, 1944, p. 15). There had been considerable development in the numbers of Associations in and around London, but the Paris Conference established the world wide

movement and added more substance to the interconnectedness between local associations. The emphasis on local liberty was possible, perhaps because of the mutuality and the assumed and shared common purpose. At this time, the common purpose was still held to be overtly Christian and evangelistic. At the Paris Conference this Christian emphasis was strengthened and local autonomy was further enhanced. This emphasis on local autonomy was a significant intention of George Williams and the founders who, it appears, favoured this model over a centralised structure.

With the Paris Basis secured, George Williams made it known that he was keen to ensure that the Christian basis was applied universally because several Associations were showing signs of “departing from the first principles, while others were in a more or less moribund condition, or had become institutions existing merely for the advancement of education and good fellowship” (Hodder-Williams, 2012, p. 188). It seems that for George Williams, the intention was never for local associations to only be places of education, fellowship and fun, but that the first evangelistic principle needed to remain foremost.

Over the next 50 years, the YMCA continued to grow. The Jubilee gathering held in London in June 1894 was the largest ever delegated religious meeting in the British Isles to that date (Hodder-Williams, 2012, p. 272). By 1895, Associations in the world wide movement had grown to over 5000 with an individual membership of half a million. The English Associations numbered 893 with 87,000 members. By 1909, the YMCA returns showed an international movement hosted by 45 nationalities, over 7,000 Associations and an individual membership of over 700,000.

In England programmes were being developed locally to work with youths and boys (Wort, 1944, p. 28). Programmes included training in vocational and cultural subjects. Physical education classes were being delivered with a range of sports on offer. During the Great War, YMCA centres and mobile canteens provided conversation, warm drinks and writing materials to soldiers.

In the years between the world wars, the YMCA rebuilt its resources having expended a major portion of its cash reserves and assets on the war effort, in addition to the extraordinary commitment from thousands of its volunteers. After the war, the need for trained leaders in the YMCA was met by the provision of a training college in North London catering for comprehensive training in professional leadership for secretaries and physical directors. Education grew in importance and became the mainstay of many Associations in Britain. Wort writes that the aim of education programmes was to “increase acquaintance with facts; strengthen power of thought and judgements and to quicken imagination” (1944, p. 44). Additionally, the educational atmosphere “affected the expression of the Association’s religious message” (1944, p. 45). Where religious meetings did occur, they contained more educational content delivered in question and answer sessions and lectures. In other Associations, services to the community including education were becoming the accepted expression of the Christian basis.



Towards 1938, increasing international instability, political strife and economic hardship made the YMCA's international work difficult to sustain. However, the British arm of the movement had, after 95 years, grown to hold 500 Associations with 83,000 members and 300 full time paid secretaries. War descended and the normal international activities of the YMCA were suspended. Throughout the Second World War, the YMCA served those at arms as it had during the First World War.

Upon emerging from the War, international gatherings resumed and, in particular, the World YMCA Centennial Conference held in Paris in 1955 presented an opportunity for the movement to take stock and check its interpretation of the Paris Basis and Christian activities. In 1959 the British Government published the "Albermarle Report" about the need for better leisure facilities for teenagers (Smith and Doyle, 2002). This resulted in many YMCAs creating youth clubs to promote young people's personal development.

The YMCA George Williams College was established in 1970 in London, providing training programmes for professional youth workers and the YMCA increased its emphasis on young people most in need, focussing on homelessness and unemployment. YMCA Training for Life was launched, in response to high unemployment among young people. This resulted in the creation of YMCA Training, one of the UK's leading vocational training organisations. In 1984, Y Care International was established and the overseas development agency of the YMCA in the UK and Ireland was confirmed.

At the 14th World Council of YMCAs held in Frechen, Germany in 1998, what is known as *Challenge 21* was adopted to affirm the Paris Basis as the ongoing foundation statement of the mission of the YMCA, but also added to the Kampala Principles by placing a further interpretation on the Christian basis of building a human community on the ideals of justice, love, peace and reconciliation (World Alliance of YMCAs, 2010). Within the context of governance statements, it was the first reference to women. This development is indicative of a sequence of changes in the evolution of the YMCA with its mission-based history to which was added education, social work, personal development and then community transformation. This mode of change became normative in the YMCA as is evidenced today by the very wide range of services and age groups with which YMCAs work. The YMCA originally did not work with children whereas, for example, Barnardo's did. Over the last few decades the YMCA has worked with an ever widening age range to the point that a number of programmes have become family oriented. The same trend has occurred with Barnardo's with one reason being the influence of government strategy and the funding that follows it. This has also resulted in additional challenges to leaders such as CEOs who have to achieve a balance between resource-intensive programmes that meet a wide range of practical needs requiring specialist interventions and the application of Christian-based engagement activities.

Barnardo's Homes expanded rapidly and by 1902, as attested by a published article that appeared in the 1902 Kelly's Gores Street Directory of Liverpool, "over five thousand four hundred orphan or waif children are now in the homes" (Smith, 2002). The article reports that these homes cared for over 44,397 children with 50 to 60 new admissions a

week. It notes that training in manual work was provided to prepare these children for life in society. The article provides an indication of its reach within England by concluding that “eleven branches under the common title of *An Ever-Open Door* are also ready for the reception of destitute children at any hour of the day or night, in as many provincial towns and cities, viz: Bath, Belfast, Birmingham, Brighton, Bristol, Cardiff, Leeds, Liverpool, Plymouth, Newcastle and Portsmouth.”

This article also refers to the managed migration of children undertaken in the Dr. Barnardo's Homes. It reports that “12,604 trained and tested emigrants have already been placed out in the colonies. Of these, 98 per cent have been successful.” Bean and Melville (1989, p. 40) quoted in Smith (2002), argue that Dr Barnardo was the “most influential figure in the child migration of the last half of the nineteenth century, and his organisation the most important”. They note that the “first party of 50 boys was sent to Canada in 1882; girl's migration began in 1883” (the youngest being just four years old). The justification for this forced migration, according to Hitchman (1966, p. 64) who quoted Barnardo (from 1889), was that “overcrowding was a cause of moral degradation and that the Christian had a duty to attempt to relieve population pressure”. In other words, social manipulation was deemed a legitimate Christian enterprise by Barnardo.

The YWCA's international expansion accelerated with “three London hostels opened in 1863 to provide home life based on Christian principles and at moderate charges for girls from the country working in London” (YWCA, 2013). In 1879 “work began with girls employed in public bars, railway refreshment rooms, laundries and so on”. This included

action for the improvement of homes and working conditions, as well as the distribution of Christian literature, meetings and personal visiting (YWCA, 2013).

In the United States around 1866, the development of the YWCA was the result of the same type of associative endeavour that started the YMCA. A group of 35 Christian women met in New York City and formed the first Ladies' Christian Association to "provide for the temporal, moral, and religious welfare of young women". In 1866 in Boston another group of women met with similar aims, formed an organisation, and wrote the constitution for the Young Women's Christian Association. By 1900, hundreds of YWCAs were in existence in the United States and the national organisation was formed in 1906 (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2013a).

Local YWCAs are affiliated with their national associations, which in turn are members of the World YWCA, organised in London in 1894, with headquarters in Geneva. In the early 1980s, the YWCA started to focus on training and apprenticeships for women in what were traditionally male-dominated industries. A youth, community and education department was created and, by 1998, access to opportunities programmes started in eight YWCA youth and community centres aiming to improve the employment prospects of women aged 16 to 19.

The YWCA decided to stop offering social housing and instead to concentrate on youth and community work. Hostels were sold to other registered social landlords or housing associations and the YWCA strengthened its campaigning and services to support and empower young women. This resulted in a new department of policy, research and campaigns established to increase YWCA's campaigning and influencing activity. It is

difficult to discern what were the key drivers for this change were, but as described earlier, the motivations for the YMCA's change programme were policy and sustainability. It is possible that these same drivers also played a significant role in the YWCA's need to change.

By 1919, the Children's Society had developed a portfolio of homes. With support from parishes and individuals across the country, Edward Rudolf had set up 113 children's care homes throughout England and Wales. The partnership with the Church of England helped these to be radical in their day as they provided accommodation for just a handful of children, ensuring a family-centred upbringing, which was very different from the 100-bed residential establishments commonplace at this time (Children's Society, 2013c). The "Fortieth Annual Report of the Society" (Fowell Swan, 1920, p. 14) records that 3,384 children were being looked after in the Society's homes.

From this time to the 1970s, the Children's Society continued to change because twentieth-century social attitudes had moved on considerably from those which were prevalent when Edward Rudolf set up the Children's Society and there had been two major changes to the way it worked. The society closed many children's homes and it moved away from adoption and fostering and focussed on helping young people to help themselves (Children's Society, 2013a).

From 1969, the Children's Society set up day centres to engage with families and, in 1986, community and Diocesan development teams were set up, drawing on the Children's Society's link to the Church of England as a means to help families to support

Page | 45

themselves. Starting in the 1990s, the Children's Society turned its focus to social justice with an emphasis on lobbying, influencing policy and talking about particular issues such as child prostitution in addition to running day centres.

As noted earlier in this section, the drivers for significant changes in the mission focus in these organisations was and continues to be motivated by the need to keep these resource-hungry charities viable in times when national policy changes and funding follows these changes. This dilemma originates from the drive towards meeting more complex needs. The YMCA, for example, began by working with young men through mission-focussed programmes that were funded largely by the young men themselves through subscriptions. By the 1990s, most English YMCAs were funded by a mixture of grants and membership fees and, in the last decade, YMCAs have taken on grants, contracts and social enterprises in keeping with other charities in order to access more funding to address more complex programmes. YMCA White Rose, for example, delivers nine programmes including youth work, mental health, childcare, training and development, teenage pregnancy, afterschool clubs, play apprenticeships, sports development and spiritual education. These are funded through 26 different sources. This is typical of contemporary local YMCAs. In circumstances like these local YMCAs might experience difficulty in balancing Christian mission intentions with these programmes in ways other than accepting that the programmes are themselves the mission.

Today the YMCA works with over 58 million people in 119 countries worldwide. Since it was established, the YMCA has adapted to the changing needs of young people. Today it works with young men and women regardless of race, religion or culture. In every corner of the world, the YMCA is helping young people to build a future (YMCA England, 2013a). The YMCA movement in England describes its vision as that of “an inclusive Christian movement, transforming communities so that all young people truly belong, contribute and thrive. Yes, we’re faith-based, but everyone is welcome at the YMCA” (YMCA England, 2013a). YMCA England is itself a YMCA, but one with a different role because it supports and represents the YMCAs in England and campaigns on national issues that affect its clients. YMCA White Rose, the local member YMCA in which I work, is located in Yorkshire and it shares the same vision described above, but seeks to enact it locally.

## **Constitutional Considerations**

In this historical survey of the YMCA, Barnardo's, YWCA and the Children's Society I have demonstrated the development of each organisation's relationship with its Christian basis. Another consideration that affects the relationship between these organisations and their Christian history is their constitutional foundation. All four organisations are registered charities in England. In English law, "charity" is defined in the preamble of the English 1601 Statute of Charitable Uses (Luxton, 2009, p. 1), and its subsequent interpretation through four centuries of case law, which resulted in four charitable purposes: relief of poverty, advancement of education, advancement of religion and other purposes beneficial to the community. In this section, I explore how each of the four organisations in my historical survey have addressed the need to demonstrate public benefit, given that the Charities Act 2006 placed an onus on trustees providing an annual account of the benefit to the public.

### **The YMCA's Constitutional Position**

The YMCA covers all four charitable purposes in its six charitable objects. The first two of these charitable objects fall under the category of *advancement of religion* and are derived from the *Paris Basis*, an agreement that was adopted internationally by the movement in 1855 at the international Paris YMCA Conference to define the commonly held Christian basis. I argue that in comparison with other Christian charities the YMCA has a different relationship with its Christian basis because the *Paris Basis*, as an overt statement of the essence of the YMCA's Christian basis, was included in the YMCA's charitable objects, which in turn combine to make a public benefit statement. This means that the YMCA's benefit to the public includes the Paris Basis with its overtly



Christian intentions. The World YMCA Centennial Conference held in Paris in 1955 presented an opportunity for the Movement to take stock and check its interpretation of the Paris Basis and Christian activities. Muukkonen notes that it was indirectly agreed at the conference that the Paris Basis would serve as a bond between national movements, while the interpretation of the Paris Basis within each country was “their own business” (1997, p. 22). In other words, the Paris Basis was defined as the international agreement or intention between national YMCA movements to remain focussed on the Christian basis. In turn, the national movements were required to reach agreements internally with local member YMCA’s in each country as to how they would enact the Christian basis locally.

The significance of this reinterpretation was that it separated the international from the national. It made it necessary for National Councils to guarantee that local associations would be populated by leadership that remained in the “hands of men who, whatever be their church affiliation, have a vital experience of Christian life and earnest desire to extend the Kingdom of God among young men” (Muukkonen 1997, p. 22). In England the impact was minimal because charitable registration of local YMCAs made direct reference to the Paris Basis in the form of the first two overtly Christian registered charitable objects. This means that the enactment of the Christian basis as described in the overtly Christian registered charitable objects is part of the local YMCA’s constitution. This interpretation may be as prevalent today as it was in 1955. The Paris Basis and its incorporation into the overtly Christian registered charitable objects of local member YMCAs provides an important regulatory and structured recognition of the Christian basis and this is different from, for example, the charitable objects of

Barnardo's, which do not require the application of the Christian basis in order to meet the public benefit requirements of Barnardos as a registered charity. In other words, the YMCA's Christian basis is part of the YMCA's charitable registration, whereas the objectives of Barnardos do not contain a direct reference to its Christian heritage.

The YMCA in England is grappling with the challenges inherent in demonstrating the contemporary public benefit of the overt Christian-based objects. In the English YMCA, the current strategic conversation is located around three strands, namely a) the brand of the YMCA; b) the movement strategy; and c) the constitution. Work on each of these strands is being undertaken by a task group. This process follows discussions in November 2012 and at meetings of the National Board of the YMCA. Parsons (2010) reports how YMCA England "Rejects Name Change But Readies own Relaunch". This statement was made in light of the YMCA in the United States choosing to rebrand to become the "YMCA". This movement strategy agenda replaces the previous strategic consultation which took place in 2009 (YMCA England, 2009) and has as one of the objectives: "To celebrate and nurture the Christian heart of the Movement and demonstrate this in practical ways, in order to promote and encourage spiritual growth".

One possible reason for the difference of approach between YMCA England and the "YMCA" in the USA is that the USA has "the high dependency on a paying client group" (Zald and Denton, 1963, p. 216) and therefore the more potent immediate influence that the paying clientele has on decisions and policy; whereas in the English YMCA, most clients at the moment do not pay for services and while they are increasingly involved in decision-making, the governance power is still largely vested with the board.

In terms of the YMCA's constitution, the work on this follows adoption by the National Council (on 8 April 2011) of Bye-law 8 - *Our Commitment to Each Other* (Appendix Five). This bye-law requires local YMCAs to adopt a new model constitution which has been consulted upon. YMCA England is attempting through the consultation to provide a more inclusive constitution which involves the rewording of the charitable objects and including the two overtly Christian-based objects.

### **Barnardo's Constitutional Position**

Barnardo's constitution, amended and adopted on 22nd July 2011 (Barnardo's, 2011) records the organisation having the following objects: a) to promote the care, safety and upbringing of children and young people; and b) the relief of those in need by reason of age, ill-health, disability, financial hardship or other disadvantage. The document follows with a description of how, in pursuing the objects, the charity shall have regard to its basis and values where Barnardos derives its inspiration and values from the Christian faith. In Barnardo's 2013 "A Case for Constitutional Change" a commentary is provided to relate the values to the Christian basis. It specifically notes that "The concept of deriving from the Christian Faith is very important. We understand the word 'derive' to refer both to the historical origins of Barnardo's work and to its continuing, current and future source of inspiration" (Barnardo's, 2013).

Barnardo's works directly with over 200,000 children, young people and their families every year, running over 800 vital projects across the UK, including counselling for children who have been abused, fostering and adoption services, vocational training and disability inclusion groups (Barnardo's, 2013). The link is observable between this list of services, which are the objects of the charity, and the derived motivation, which is the historical Christian basis as a value. The objects of Barnardo's are not in themselves any more specifically Christian than those that might be found in a secular organisation, but the reference to the inspiration being drawn from and derivation of the work from the historical Christian basis suggests that Barnardo's is a faith legacy organisation according to the earlier definition.

#### **The YWCA's Constitutional Adjustments**

From 2000, the YWCA actively sought to identify its future direction. This was tied into a change programme that resulted in significant constitutional redevelopment and especially a modification in the organisation's relationship with its historical Christian basis. In 2001 the blue triangle brand was dropped and a new corporate design was launched along with YWCA's first website. In 2002, the organisation changed its name from "Young Women's Christian Association" to "YWCA England and Wales". In 2010, the then YWCA changed the operating name from YWCA England & Wales to "Platform 51" extending the organisation's purpose to include all girls and women who are vulnerable and isolated.

The decision to remove the Christian basis of the organisation is reported on the YWCA's website which states that:

"During the 155 years since we were founded, we've had to evolve to reflect changes in society and the needs and expectations of women. This is true not only of the work we do, but also of our name. Our original name no longer stood for who we are or what we do and people often confused us with another charity. So we have changed our operating name from YWCA England & Wales to Platform 51". (Platform 51, 2012a)

The same website indicates that the name derives from the view that "51% of people are female. We changed our operating name from YWCA to Platform 51 in 2010 because it more accurately represents who we are and what we do. Over the years we've evolved to reflect changes in society and the needs and expectations of women. Our original name no longer stood for who we are or what we do." On the questions and answers page of the Platform 51 website (2012b) in answer to the question "Are you still Christian?" the answer provided by Platform 51 is "No. We were founded by Christian women in 1855, but our work is no longer faith-based." In reaching the view that that name and the Christian basis were no longer appropriate for the work of the organisation, it could be argued that the YWCA has re-oriented towards a secular perspective. In 2011 Platform 51 completed the establishment of seven centres across England and Wales and became Secretariat for the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sex Equality with the Fawcett Society. Platform 51 currently focusses service development in the areas of education, employment and skills, health and wellbeing, crime and offending, and money and debt.

### **The Children's Society and its Unchanged Constitution**

The Children's Society, in contrast to the YWCA, has continued to remain a Christian-based charity. The Children's Society website (Children's Society, 2013b) provides a position statement on the organisation's faith basis. It emphasises that "partnership with the Church remains of central importance; that the chairs and presidents are of the clergy; that partnership working extends to Church of England schools and to the networks of children's work advisors and youth officers; that there are plans to work in partnership with every single parish in the Church of England; and that support of the work in prayer, through giving and by volunteering is important." A final statement of inclusive intent states that "we would like to work with all people who share our values, whether Christians from other denominations, people of other faiths, or people of no faith at all".

### **A Brief Theological Perspective on the Origins of These Organisations**

The common theological theme running through the early development of these organisations was the call to enact faith in visible and tangible ways that affected the lives of those less well off.

The individuals who started these organisations intended to help others at their point of need and were motivated by their Christian beliefs. One such belief was that having been deemed worthy by God of salvation they were in turn called to be co-workers with God (1 Corinthians 3:9) in "saving" the lives of others. Landlow comments on the Victorian Evangelical movement that "converted believers must demonstrate their spirituality by working for others — thus Evangelical zeal in missionary work, Bible

societies, anti-slavery movements, and many social causes” (Landlow, 1988). This desire and obligation to help others arose out of the Victorian revival (Altholz, 2001).

This same mix of duty, grateful desire to care and obligation is evident in the care work of contemporary faith-based organisations, except that it is joined by other motivations which derive their power from sources other than Christianity. From a biblical perspective people are in the image of God and carry this with them in the mystery of life (Genesis 9:6 and James 3:9). This is one of the reasons why many Christians consider human life to be sacred and why Christians engage in charitable work. In the YMCA there are other motivations besides those based on Christian faith. The YMCA does not just employ Christians and many people working in the YMCA do so simply because they care for other humans. Green refers to an African proverb to demonstrate the point that many people care because they have an innate sense that their humanity is connected to all humanity: “A person is a person because of other people” (Green, 2009, p. 10).

## **A Summary Description of the YMCA's Categorisation in Context.**

In summary, it is notable that by applying my conceptual classifications to these four organisations, namely the YMCA, YWCA, Barnardo's and the Children's Society, I have identified that while all originated from a Christian faith basis, each is located differently in the contemporary charitable environment. Barnardo's primary work has been in the United Kingdom, but the organisation was involved in the international migration of children. Barnardo's openly recognises links with its historical Christian faith basis and the organisation deliberately uses the words "inspiration" and "derivation" to describe the contemporary relationship that it has with its faith legacy. From this it is appropriate to define Barnardo's as a faith-legacy organisation.

The Children's Society did not expand internationally, but has continuously maintained the significance of its Christian basis as a central motivation for its work. The Children's Society is aptly described as a faith-based organisation. This is in light of its explicit and overt relationship with its historical Christian basis, but also with an emphasis on how its Christian history is central today and how partnership with the Church is central to the organisation's future growth and success.

The YWCA in England has sought to actively remove any contemporary relationship with its historical Christian faith basis. It has been operationally renamed as Platform 51 and has been explicit in informing the public that it no longer considers faith to be a motivational factor in its work. On this basis, Platform 51 represents a displaced-faith organisation in my classification.



Using the classification from Sider and Unruh (2004, p. 120) it appears that the YMCA might be classified as a faith-affiliated organisation or as a faith-background organisation (see page 4ff for details). It is faith-affiliated, because the YMCA “retains some influence from its founder” and faith-background because the YMCA has “a historical tie to a faith tradition”, but delivers secular programmes. In terms of my classification with its emphasis on the dynamic journey taken by organisations with a faith history and from a purely constitutional perspective, it is possible that the YMCA movement in England is grappling with the challenges of balancing the historical meaning of the Christian emphasis with the contemporary understanding of, and status given to, the Christian basis.

The YMCA in England currently maintains a relationship with its historical Christian faith basis, but it is one which is subject to scrutiny and debate internally as the YMCA works out its relationship with its past. In some ways Barnardo’s position contrasts with that of the YMCA. Barnardo’s has determined that from its historical faith basis it derives an important inspiration for its work, thereby making a clear distinction between historical and contemporary contexts. In contrast, the YMCA’s position seems to suggest that the historical Christian basis is active and central to its contemporary programme. In this it appears similar to the Children’s Society and yet the conversation and debate within the English YMCA movement suggests that it is attempting to work out what the nature of its relationship is with its historical Christian basis. From this perspective, the YMCA may be classified as a faith-legacy organisation. However, it is possible that different

understandings exist in the English YMCA because of its federated structure. Some local

Page | 57

YMCAs may well be operating as faith-based organisations and others as faith-legacy organisations, or even as displaced-faith organisations depending on their approach to the historical Christian basis. In essence, this is of importance to my research project.

In my research I have sought to identify what the Christian basis means to a sample of YMCAs. In the next chapter I describe my context and conceptual framework together with the methodological underpinnings and proposition for my research.

## CHAPTER TWO: MY CONTEXT, THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapter I provided a historical overview of the YMCA together with a description of the relationship between the YMCA and the Church. In this section I explore my position and role in the research in terms of motivations and biases. I also define a conceptual position followed with a discussion of the philosophical and paradigmatic implications of my approach, leading on to the methodological statement and description of methods.

### **Background Noise in my Research-My Motivations and Biases**

This section describes an attempt to identify some of the *background noise* in my research. I refer to those influences that are formational from my childhood which can be motivational, de-motivational and which can and do, create biases in my outlook and praxis. I use the analogy of radio transmission noise because at worst, un-tuned radio sounds can be distracting or irritating and at best they guide one to a finely tuned and coherent broadcast. The background noise in my research is the *flotsam and jetsam* of my life's experiences interpreted and expressed consciously and unconsciously in my motivations and prejudices. I have to take care, as much as is practicable, not to allow the voice in my research to be covered over by my prejudices and biases. Part of the mitigation against the self-induced negative influences on my research is to briefly describe my own background.

Growing up in a relatively under-developed part of the southern African landscape, meant that I was surrounded by a wilderness context bounded by a developmental interface at which industry and agriculture were creating inroads into places where, prior to intervention, no human footprint had embellished the land for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. My sense of, and attachment to, the land is as strong as my witness to the intensity of human interactions with it. Indeed, the degree to which humans can manipulate the landscape is of significant theological relevance to me.

The continuum between land and culture is for me an important biblical theme expressed in an episode such as Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings:21). This awareness is the probable root of my expectation that change agents in culture, socio-economics, the built environment and the natural world are all interrelated. In the same way, the YMCA, its culture, its clients and services are all interrelated.

There are other influences from my childhood. For example, the cultural diversity and admixing of colonial Christianity, African traditional religions and post-colonial free churches forced me to recognise at an early age that the society in which we live is rich and diverse. A second example of an influence is the South African post colonial environment with its grand buildings, a lasting but often decaying reminder of pretensions to inherent supremacy as seen through the colonists' own eyes. These colonial appendages appeared to me to be a representation of the desire to create order and to build a legacy. They also spoke of colonial ignorance of existing orders and legacies. These thoughts have led me to consciously attempt to recognise the stories and heritage of others as and when I become aware of them. At work, I am conscious of the

Page | 60

rich and diverse mix that is the daily YMCA and, in my research; I naturally gravitate towards attempting to identify as wide a range of responses as possible. In addition, as was pointed out to me by one of my supervisors, the metaphor of colonial structures crumbling in the grandeur might well bear a visual influence on my assumptions about the organisational health of the YMCA. In my research planning, I have mitigated this potential by ensuring that my model of understanding God is sufficiently inclusive of non-traditional conceptions of what God is like. For example, I am open to hearing voices in my research that point to God being elusive (Terrien, 2000) and as Yancey observes in his book *Finding God in Unexpected Places*, I too expect to “observe a pattern, a strange historical phenomenon of God moving geographically from place to place” (2002, p. 65).

Some of the heavy undertones of colonialist heritage also influenced me unconsciously at an early age. The inherent supremacist attitude shared by many racist white South Africans was not universal. The sum of these experiences has fostered a keen sense of fairness, respect, care and the recognition of merit irrespective of faith, class, gender or race.

In order to understand how my background has affected my relationship with God, I was guided to engage with Perrine’s models for Spiritual Temperaments (Perrine, 2007, pp. 27-110). According to this test, I score very highly as an *Activist*, very closely followed with the *Intellectual* and *Caregiver* temperaments.

My lowest score is in the *Enthusiast's* temperament. I am aware from Perrine, that these temperaments are not exclusive categories, but are aspects in a mix. One might be stronger in some and not in others. My keen and inclusive sense of fairness, respect, care and the recognition of merit, I now know, come from witnessing injustices within my formative culture, society and family environment.

Another effect that my background has had is the self-imposed expectation that my faith has to be enacted - it has to result in benefits for others through my actions. In my own family and elsewhere, I witnessed people of faith choosing to ignore or failing to notice the need for action to address situations that called for fairness, respect and care. My own relatively comfortable history has challenged me to work for those who are less well provided for than myself. My action motivated by faith results from my acknowledgement that in accepting salvation, I am called to share the potential of that opportunity with others. However, having grown up in a relatively diverse environment I was conscious early on in my faith journey that not all people would share my beliefs and that in practising my faith I would need to find room in it to care for those who were of different persuasions.

In the YMCA, my appointed role requires me to be a committed Christian. On closer scrutiny, it is evident that the reason for this is not so much a matter of me having to be a token Christian in the organisation, but rather it is so that I act together with others to ensure that the work of the YMCA is a performance of the Gospel in society and is true to Christ's revelation as held in Scripture, doctrine and tradition. I find the need to explore the meaning, function and role of Christian praxis to be critical in my ability to

Page | 62

successfully undertake my work. For me, the experience of exploration is both incarnational and revelatory. As I journey through the research, I continue to expect to see the Body of Christ at work both with and through the lives of young people, staff and volunteers, who are all part of the daily life of the YMCA.

I am motivated by a conviction that my Christian faith requires me to work out my beliefs and theology in everyday life. I believe that there is a creative tension or dynamic between the call to acknowledge the unearned grace of salvation and the faith enacted through works. I do not consider faith and action to be mutually exclusive. In fact, I rather think that each feeds the other. From an early age it seemed to me that too much significance is given to the separation of physical and spiritual and not enough recognition to the continuity of both aspects. A spiritual act may by its nature exhibit a physical outworking and a physical act, in its fullness, is the expression of a spiritual motivation. My expectation is that this research will result in change within the English YMCA in terms of its relationship with its Christian basis.

The importance of being able to recognise the tenets of my faith in sound theology is critical in my role in the YMCA. However, the desire to express my faith practically was a motivating factor in joining the organisation in the first instance. At heart, I am a pragmatic person with a propensity towards enquiry: I want to understand the nature and history of my faith. I need to know my theology intrinsically and personally, and yet I also need to know that my faith is legitimate. My faith has to result in changes in me and of circumstances and things. I have to enact my faith in the security of sound theology.

My faith must result in action. Culture and legacy are meaningful to me because they tell

of the intergenerational journeys that people carry in their deep histories, and which influence their thoughts and actions in the here and now.

My colonial history squeezes awkward feelings of guilt within me which, in turn, produces a desire not to offend and a motivation to assist others.

In my chosen research model, the subject and researcher are closely related so the core motivations driving the research and are to be understood in as much detail as possible. In addition, but nevertheless just as important, are the assumptions that are carried into the research. This next section provides an opportunity for me to reflect on my background as well as my interactions with the YMCA and the relationship between myself and the research. Despite the benefits described as inherent in the role of researcher as research instrument within the research context, the project faced the increased danger of concentrated bias and prejudice inherent in the qualitative approach (Yin, 2009, p. 72).

As a self-defined Christian engaged in the practice and exercise of my faith, I sensed a natural bias towards overt Christian practice, where the description *overt* refers to Christian activity emanating from Christians and their practices that others might recognise as external to the Christian individual.

My particular understanding was moulded through growing up in a lively Methodist context, followed by a time in the charismatic movement and latterly becoming more involved in the Anglican Communion. My experiences created an expectation that faith would be expressed in a multivalent way though worship individually and collectively



inside and outside of the Church, but with an expression that might often result in actions intended to show love through the sacrificial gift of one's time, talents and energy.

As my ecclesial journey has progressed, I have become more aware of the frailty of the human portion within church and how it appears that there are many people who, without the Christian faith, are able to demonstrate a deep and enduring love for others. This sense of care is perhaps inherent in being human, is very much a subject of ongoing debate (Leininger and McFarland, 1988, pp. 149-159) and it is beyond the scope of my research.

In seeking to understand my prejudices and their effect on my method, I came to the view that there were three aspects to consider which resonate with Gadamer's treatment of method in terms of tradition, authority and prejudice (1975, p. 268ff). First, Gadamer (1975, pp. 280-285) argues that tradition is the legitimate "romantic criticism of the enlightenment's" (p. 281) reduction of the power of authority and that this criticism depends on the idea that "tradition has a justification that lies beyond rational grounding and in large measure determines our institutions and attitudes" (p. 282). The YMCA's tradition located in its organisational history is Christian-based as expressed overtly within its charitable objects.

Within this context, my expectations of the YMCA were that it would be focussed on showing care and love in practical ways to demonstrate its Christian basis. In this assumption, I exhibited my tendency towards the legitimisation of the YMCA's specific

Page | 65

traditional Christian statements of intent. In order to mitigate my bias, I needed to also take into account that for some people in the YMCA such a tradition does not exist. The questions that arose from this and which I sought to address in my research were: a) what motivated people in the YMCA other than a Christian tradition and b) what effect did the YMCA's Christian tradition have in their working lives?

Second, in addressing the relationship between authority and method, Gadamer (1975, pp. 279-280) describes legitimate authority as that which is productively gained through knowledge. Lawn (2006, p. 37) explains Gadamer's position using the analogy of the teacher whose authority is substantially found in the "questions they open up rather than the sanctions that they might bring to bear". In order for the authority in the YMCA emanating from the Christian leadership and governance to have any gravitas, the expectation is that it has to be dynamic and engaging. My biased expectation was that while many people in the YMCA were non-Christian, they would nevertheless be subject to a clear understanding that all the work of the YMCA arises from overt Christian leadership and governance. However, on reflection that very authority might well question the relevance of the Christian basis in the YMCA and do so as a legitimate function of leadership.

Third, the ancient meaning of the word *prejudice* is a hallmark of a fuller Gadamerian hermeneutic (Lawn, 2006, p. 39). Gadamer (1975, pp. 278-279) argues for the "rehabilitation of the concept of prejudice" so that a distinction can be drawn between prejudice that is "overhasty" and therefore illegitimate, and prejudice born of true hermeneutic authority and therefore legitimate. My bias was twofold, namely a) that I

expected to uncover a diminishment of the significance of the Christian basis in the YMCA with people of no faith or non-Christian faith; and b) the expectation that I would generally and prejudicially expect to see a typological Christian faith in discernible action within the YMCA acting in authority at a leadership and governance level.

Upon reflection, and in attempting to temper or mitigate my biases, I began to read my data with a renewed understanding. I recognised the possible existence of multiple streams of tradition, authority and prejudice (polyvalent realities as in Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.36) running in parallel throughout the history of the YMCA. Perhaps it was simply the balance between these that I was witnessing in a state of flux. In accepting this hypothesis, I felt that I was making progress in not only addressing my biases and prejudicial judgements, but that I was in a better position to work out the means of more positive feedback in my research.

### **Researcher as Instrument**

With reference to Lincoln and Guba (1985), Hoepfl (1997) suggests that before conducting a qualitative study, a researcher must do three things. First, adopt the stance suggested by the characteristics of the naturalist paradigm. Second, develop the vehicles through which data will be collected and interpreted. Third, prepare a research design that utilises accepted strategies for naturalistic inquiry. While I developed various vehicles to aid the research, the research process is fundamentally reliant on me as the research instrument. The significance of my role in this context was made more crucial by the choice of professional doctorate with its emphasis on researching within my contemporary work environment.

As research instrument, I have studied a range of literature together with professional and personal experiences from various sources in order to build a credible research programme. Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to what they call the “theoretical sensitivity” of the researcher. Theoretical sensitivity refers to the attribute of having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand and capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not (Strauss and Corbin, 1990, pp. 42-43). Strauss and Corbin (1990, pp. 43-53) believe that theoretical sensitivity comes from a number of sources, including professional literature, professional experiences and personal experiences. The credibility of a qualitative research report relies heavily on the confidence readers have in the researcher's ability to be sensitive to the data and to make appropriate decisions in the field (Hoepfl. 1997).

Lincoln and Guba (1985) identify the characteristics that make me the “instrument of choice” for the research that I am conducting in the English YMCA. They note that people are responsive to environmental cues, and able to interact with the situation; they have the ability to collect information at multiple levels simultaneously; they are able to perceive situations holistically; they are able to process data as soon as they become available; they can provide immediate feedback and request verification of data; and they can explore atypical or unexpected responses. In designing my research programme, I engaged various means to acquire data from a number of sources including literature, individual volunteers, staff and trustees, but also through group activities and discussions.

### **Uncertainty - the Backdrop to the Research**

My research within the English YMCA took place against the backdrop of a changing and challenging environment. This volatility is observable in the world at large. At the macro level “globalisation, technology and increased environmental awareness, combined with a number of seismic shocks to the global economic system such as 9/11, SARS, Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Asian Tsunami, and the global credit crunch have resulted in an increase in volatility, uncertainty and risk (Axson, 2009, p. 3). At the other end of the scale, these same seismic changes are having a major effect on the charitable sector in England and elsewhere.

Changeable trends are evident in the charitable sector as a whole. Charitable investment income is down 69% for charities in England, grant income is down 31%; and fundraising is down 26% at a time when demand is reported to be up by 17% (Charity Commission, 2009, pp. 3-7). The YMCA is affected by the downturn in the economy. Its income is reduced at a time when demand for services and need is increasing. The uncertainty and volatility inherent in this mixed environment has also had an impact on my research journey as has the unfolding of the research process which has revealed nuances and issues that have required an ongoing process of adaption and response.

## **Concepts Governing the Main Research Project**

The central concept within my research is the YMCA's Christian basis. In this section I briefly describe the Christian basis and other concepts that relate to it. In the initial stages of planning for the research, considerable attention was paid to this, but I was initially unclear regarding how significant the other elements including spirituality, motivation and inclusion were in relation to the Christian basis. It became clear that spirituality, motivation and inclusion are significant contributory elements within the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis. Therefore, I have prioritised a mixed set of related concepts derived from my initial hunch about the YMCA.

The YMCA's Christian basis may be described with reference to the historical survey in Chapter One. Its origin is tied into the initiation of the YMCA. In a historical context it refers to a relationship between the YMCA as an organisational movement and Christians who sought to work together (association) to care for young people. This care was in part practical and developmental, e.g. shelter, learning and skills. It was also spiritual in a Christian context. There are examples commonplace in the Victorian period of the YMCA's history of early YMCA leaders helping young men to improve their literacy by using the Bible as a teaching aid. This approach provided the additional perceived benefit of automatically familiarising these young men with Scripture.

In the contemporary YMCA in England there is no requirement for staff and volunteers other than trustees and some senior staff to be practising Christians, which is in contrast to the Victorian YMCA. It is therefore important to recognise that the nature of the relationship with the Christian basis is different too. Exploration of this relationship is central to my research question.

Within the YMCA the ideas of spirituality and spiritual needs are conceptually challenging. Given that the focus of my research is not on the YMCA's spirituality, but rather on its Christian basis and that there are conceptual links between these two categories I decided that I would reference spirituality in the research but do so within the context of its relationship with the Christian basis. Therefore, in the pilot study (reported from page 80ff), I investigated the meanings attached to spirituality by the participants. I also considered the registered charitable object in the YMCAs constitution which refers to spirituality in the context of *spiritual education*. This charitable object states:

***“Provide or assist in the provision of education for persons of all ages with the object of developing their physical, mental or spiritual capacities”.***

(Chantry YMCA, 2005)

Hodder-Williams provides an interesting insight into what form *spiritual education* might have taken early in the YMCA's history. He records how George Williams initiated meetings and how he set out the content of these meetings during the time when the YMCA was forming (1906, p.98-99). Hodder-Williams notes, for example, that during a meeting where 27 young men were present, George Williams introduced Christian



concepts from books by Charles Finney and following the ensuing discussion these young men agreed to “band together to enter upon a systematic campaign. A kind of informal home missionary society was formed, one of the plans of which was that in due course everyone in the house should be spoken to about his soul.” It seems therefore that spiritual education in the traditional YMCA context was concerned with *Christian spiritual education*. Nevertheless, data from the pilot study did not support this interpretation of spiritual education in the contemporary context of the study. Instead the pilot study suggested that participants thought of spirituality in a mixed set of categories ranging from religious definitions to non-religious and sociological definitions.

Following the results of the pilot study I concluded that the most appropriate response was to frame spirituality in the same way that Holmes does: “in grappling with definitions of spirituality one can treat it as the human search for meaning, particularly relationally , and that for anyone today this incorporates a supernatural/corporeal dimension that suggests many of us have discovered that we are more than our physical biology” (2009, p. 24). While an imperfect definition it does accommodate the wide range of definitions that I expected to encounter in my research programme.

As demonstrated in the earlier historical review, the YMCA has continuously adapted throughout its history and is again in need of a contemporary response to its original historical Christian basis. This response has been formed by successive generations in the YMCA, who over time have decided to “associate their efforts” (Chantry YMCA, 2005, p. 2) in the YMCA for a common purpose in addressing the needs of others. This is part of the essential nature of organisations – individuals working together towards a

Page | 73

common purpose or purposes. Howe's assertion (Denzin and Giardina, 2011, p. 121) is that "when beings cooperate in the pursuit of goals they exhibit collective intentionality".

The epistemological focus in the pilot study was oriented around the idea of intentional conception in causality, "establishing and accounting for ordered patterns of human behaviour in terms of norm-governed institutions" (Howe in Denzin and Giardina, 2011, p. 119). When people collaborate in thoughtful activities in the pursuit of finding out the means to achieve something of value, then in certain respects they are participating in forms of Aristotelian *phronesis*. Natali (2001, p. 185) reports that, following a rigorous debate in the 1990s, "everyone agrees that *phronesis*, as the capability of grasping concrete ways and means of achieving an end on the basis of deliberation, must have a certain knowledge of the end itself. But the question is this, does *phronesis* itself establish practical ends, or does it acquire them from a superior faculty?" This general explanation of human behaviour in pursuit of a common wisdom may be interpreted in what Brown describes in a Christian context as the role of practical theology as that "field of inquiry and practice that seeks critically to discern and respond to the transforming activity of God within the living text of human action" (2012, p. 112). From a Christian perspective, the superior faculty might well be the will, word or wisdom of God.

## **My Proposition**

It is a reasonable assumption that people working in organisations associate their efforts in order to achieve the common goals or purposes defined by that organisation. People working and volunteering in the YMCA do so for these and various other reasons. While some individuals would be motivated by the regular expectations, e.g. a job, money or convenience, there ought to be other motivations, including those arising out of recognition of the Christian basis.

It is also reasonable to assume that there is an interplay between those choosing to work from a faith-motivated means and those choosing to work from some other philanthropically motivated basis or simply to be in employment. My research, would focus on an exploration of these assumptions thereby creating a theory or theories about the YMCA, its people and their relationship with the Christian basis. These theories would describe the meaning attached to the Christian basis with a view to providing plausible propositions, within the rubric of the professional doctorate. These, in turn could assist the YMCA to make sense of its Christian basis and to establish additional helpful ways and means of addressing the contemporary challenges and issues that arise from the YMCA's faith basis. Taking all these requirements into account resulted in the following proposition:

**My proposition is that people working in the YMCA are appointed on the understanding that the YMCA is Christian-based; that the corporate and collective agreed means of association is located primarily in the Christian basis; and that the YMCA attaches significant meaning to its Christian basis, while operating within an inclusive environment.**

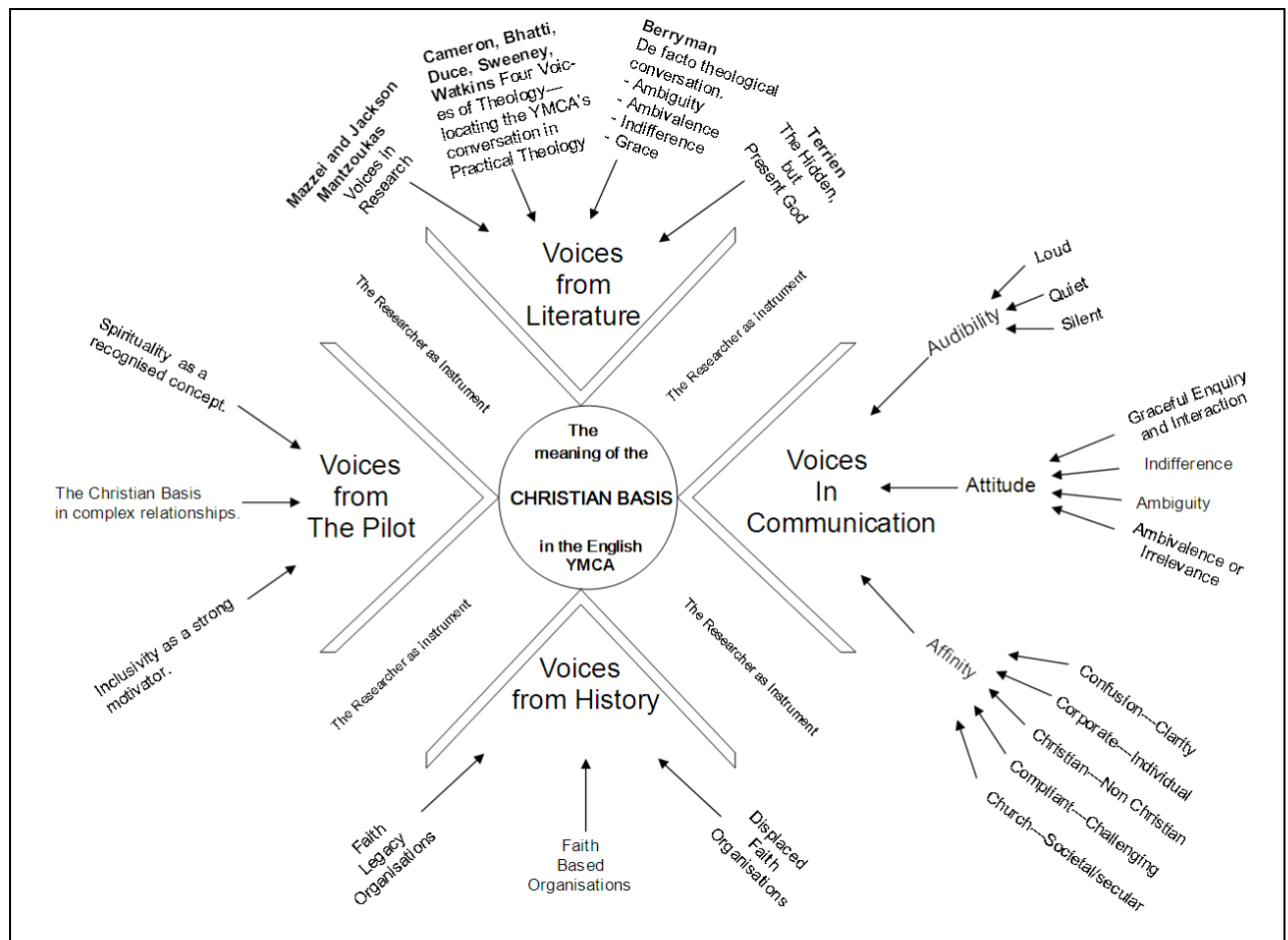
## **The Conceptual Framework**

In this section, I make sense of my research subject by employing concepts and theories that help to frame my research. In preparing to formulate a way in which to undertake the research, I “model a framework for my ideas” (Allen, 2001, p. 639). I define the context as organisational and social, as well as faith-based and theological. It is clear that I have arrived at a set of assumptions and ideas about relationships between people and the YMCA organisation as a social construction, and that my intention is to develop a theory about the YMCA, its organisational characteristics, the YMCA people involved in the research and the Christian basis.

My initial hunch or assumption was that the YMCA is facing the challenge of finding the means of responding effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society while maintaining its Christian basis in a time of rapid and far reaching societal, cultural and economic change. In order to locate relevant data on the foundation of this assumption I had to: a) convert it into a research question; b) identify its component parts; c) identify the fields of research covered by those components; and d) describe the concepts that distinguished the authenticity and academic rigour of the research.

These considerations helped to form my “current version of the researcher’s map of the subject being investigated” (Miles and Humberman, 1994, p. 94) i.e. a description of a conceptual framework as described by Trafford and Leshem (2008, p. 84). In Figure Two (below) I provide a visual representation of the sources from which I have drawn a set of concepts for my conceptual framework.

My research is socially focussed within an inductive paradigm. I built my research arguments from trustworthy sources of data prior to applying them in a full research project. I decided that a manageable way in which to facilitate this would be to start with the YMCA that employs me, which is located in Rotherham, South Yorkshire. In working initially within one YMCA to conduct a pilot study, I deliberately researched within a small-scale context with a view to generating theory. This theory, in the form of plausible statements and propositions, was further refined and applied in my later research within the English YMCA. The data collected was in different forms and was achieved via mixed methods. The data was interpreted against “forms of means making analysis to produce non-generalisable conclusions” (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p. 98).



**Figure Two: Concepts and Voices Informing my Conceptual Framework.**

At the centre of my conceptual framework is the Christian basis of the English YMCA and the meaning accorded to it. The review of the pilot study led me to the conclusion that this is the fundamental concern in my research. However, identifying the core research focus is reliant on a means of communicating between it and other contributory elements in meaningful ways.

Within my research paradigm located in a qualitative, inductive, small-scale research project, I had to define a means of communication that would take account of the contradictions inherent within a research environment populated by research participants, key literature, a theological focus, historical literature and pilot research.

Trafford and Leshem (2008, p. 98) allude to the delicate nature of communication involved in conducting research with people “from which meanings have to be sought through forms of interpretative analysis to arrive at non-generalisable and sometimes contradictory conclusions”. Richardson (2011, p. 465) states that “viewing the self as shaped by cultural forces or relations of power opens the door to conceiving of it as fragmented, disunified, or multiple”. With reference to hermeneutic philosophers, namely Dunne (1995), Gadamer (1975), Taylor (1989, 1991) and Bakhtin (1981), Richardson makes the point that they “sketch the idea of a storied or dialogical self in contrast to both punctual and radically de-centered human agency”. From Taylor (1985b) Richardson suggests that in the “hermeneutic view, humans are self-interpreting beings who draw their possibilities of self-interpretation from a familiar life-world” and that “their norms and practices are, in part, inescapably ethical”. In agreement with and quoting Dunne (1995), he suggests that “in living one answers questions, with deeds if not with words, about what matters to one”.

Therefore, it is necessary for me to identify a conceptual means of engaging with self interpreting individuals in the YMCA through their words and deeds that I record during the research. The “Life to Faith to Life” pedagogic programme proposed by Groome (1989) with its links philosophically to Osmer (2008), Gadamer (1975), Lawn (2006), Ricoeur (1971, 1976) and Habermas (1985), utilises a staged hermeneutical phenomenological approach to provide a means of interpreting research data into themes and meanings.

As may be noted from my methodological statement presented in Chapter Four, I utilise this broad means of interpretation in my design of a triangulated approach around what I have called a *dialectic of meaning*. The intention of this approach is to draw out pedagogical strands for the YMCA's consideration as a means of helping to propagate the understanding of these themes and meanings.

I orientate the research within the general concept of *voices in conversation*. To this end, I have chosen the concept of *voices*, *conversation* and *dialogue* as the mediator between the participants and interpretation of the research data. Moen suggests that "dialogue, the most fundamental of Bakhtin's (1986) concepts, is used in a very wide perspective. All human action is dialogic in nature. In its widest sense, even existence itself might be considered to be dialogic" (1996, p. 58). Furthermore, Moen relates three other central concepts in Bakhtin's theory to dialogue – those of utterance, addressee and voice. Utterances are the interactions between voices that together create meaning and understanding. This implies that voices "can never exist in isolation" Moen (2006, p. 58) and that voices actually live in dialogue. Furthermore, "meaning and understanding cannot be transferred from one person to the next, rather, they are created when voices engage in dialogue with each other." This means that the voices "heard" through the data produce meaning if they are in dialogue with other voices within a framework that helps to facilitate the dialogue.

The essence of my framework is therefore built around this concept of dialogue between voices from different sources gathered through the research. The means of providing data and its thematic interpretation is summarised in the following four points

Page | 80



which mirror the structure of the framework model in Figure 1:

- a) The historical survey which draws together voices from the YMCA, YWCA, Barnardo's and the Children's Society into a conversation about the origins of the Christian basis and the contemporary differences in each organisation (refer to page 29ff).
- b) The pilot study which enabled me to gather views about the Christian basis from participants in one YMCA and also provided a means of testing out the research question and assumptions prior to entering my wider study (refer to page 97ff).
- c) The substantive research programme from which I drew together voices from participants who originated from different parts of the YMCA, with different roles and experiences of the ways in which meaning is attached to the Christian basis (refer to page 113ff).
- d) Various literary sources, each with a perspective on voices within a researched context, provide a means of framing and interpreting the data from my research in terms of *voices*, *conversation* and *dialogue*. I orientate the research within the general concept of *voices in conversation* with reference to Mantzoukas (2004), Bakhtin (1981), Mazzei and Jackson (2012) and Cameron et al. (2010). I specifically utilise Berryman's description of the Church's *de facto* theology of children (2009) in a very narrow way to provide a means of interpreting attitudes towards the Christian basis and to help frame a commentary on a possible *de facto* theology of the YMCA. There are challenges in working with Berryman's model, for example, his approach is located in the Church and the subjects are children and the Church's relationship with them. My subject is the YMCA and the organisation's relationship with its Christian basis. Therefore, I utilise Berryman's model for the

treatment of the relationship between Church and children to instigate a model and means of understanding the relationship between the YMCA and its Christian basis. The link between Berryman's model and my model is that both describe *parent – child* relationships as a means of understanding. For Berryman the *parent – child* model describes the relationship between the Church and children and for my research the *parent – child* model describes the relationship between the YMCA and its Christian basis.

Terrien's theology (2000) helps me to describe one of the themes identified in the data which suggests that each of the groups of *voices* in the YMCA has a particular perspective on the YMCA's relationship with God. These perspectives range from God being present and active in the YMCA to God being totally absent from the contemporary YMCA. Of particular interest in Terrien's theology is his description of how these perspectives facilitate certain behaviours. When applied to the YMCA, Terrien's theology helps to describe the different affinities that voices have in their relationship with God. It also hints at how the power in those relationships is oriented. For example, those *voices* that describe God as present in the YMCA might also describe that presence in terms of a unique relationship with them alone. In turn this suggests that these voices presume to have an exclusivist and powerful ability to call on or cause God's presence in the YMCA. Conversely, those voices for whom God is absent might consider that there is nothing that they can do to invoke the presence of God in the YMCA, thus have a less powerful position. In response to both groups of voices, Terrien's theology suggests that they are misguided because the presence of God is not determined by the powers, knowledge or abilities that people have, but rather that the presence is elusive and

Page | 82

impossible to predict. Terrien's theology does however suggest that presence, while not guaranteed, seems to be mysteriously related to selfless cooperation in service to others. Terrien's theology, therefore, is a helpful means of mitigating those power relationships in the YMCA that seek to claim or disclaim the YMCA's contemporary relationship with God's purposes.

I describe my core framework as *voices in communication* in terms of three key themes: *audibility*, *affinity* and *attitude* towards the YMCA's Christian basis. Audibility in this context defines the volume, presence or strength of the particular voice as being loud, quiet or silent. In engaging with the YMCA voices, I note that each has a prevalent *affinity* with the Christian basis, which describes the origin of the voice; for example, the Christian voice originated out of a Christian faith context. The *attitude* of a voice towards the Christian basis describes the voice's relationship with the YMCA's Christian basis including: a) *graceful enquiry and interaction*; b) *Indifference*; c) *ambivalence or irrelevance*; and d) *ambiguity*.

I approach my *voices in communication* framework initially through the context set by Mazzei and Jackson (2012), Mazzei (2007) and Mantzoukas (2004), who describe the nature of voices in research and suggest ways of avoiding some of the pitfalls inherent in a simplistic engagement with voice and, in particular, with the singular voice out of context. Their conceptual treatment of voice has assisted me in orientating and modelling the *audibility* of voices in the research findings.

In terms of *affinity*, I refer to Cameron et al. (2010) and to Terrien (2000). Cameron et al. (2010) provide a tool that helps to contextualise voices of theology in conversation within their model of Theological Action Research (TAR). Whilst my research does not employ the TAR model, it does benefit from a tool presented by Cameron et al. identified as the *Four Voices of Theology* (2010, pp. 53-56).

In effect, the tool is recognition that organisational conversations are permeated with theological meaning. People, be they Christian or not, interacting together are connected to each other by experience and theology. Cameron et al. propose an approach in practical theology which supports the “deep connectedness of the Christian theological tradition and human experience” (2010, p. 13). Cameron et al. describe theology as having “many facets” and that “theology is not external to faith or superimposed on it” (2010, p. 14).

My choice of a professional doctorate for this study is partly based on the premise that such a study is multifaceted and yet focussed on that “field of inquiry and practice that seeks critically to discern and respond to the transforming activity of God (Brown, 2012, p. 112). The Four Voices of Theology allows me to consider the origins of the various voices in the research and to describe the conversations between the voices within the context of practical theology. The aim of my research, within the professional and doctoral context of Practical Theology, is to help to deepen understanding of the meaning of the Christian basis, and the conversations associated with it and to promote such conversations as practically and theologically transformative (2010, pp. 58-59).

Terrien (2000) articulates an argument based on a pre Christian, Old Testament conception that the ever present, but elusive God of the Old Testament is symbolic of the relationship that God has with contemporary society. His model helps me to describe the relationship between those voices that describe God as being absent from the contemporary YMCA and those voices that believe that they can invoke the presence of God through their definitions of Christian-based activities that are designed to be “attractive” to God. Using Terrien’s model, I suggest that the presence of God is elusive and not dependent on the activities of YMCA people, Christian or not. Terrien (2000) describes the presence of God in this world as elusive, but mediated through people and Scripture. He describes how the Israelite experience of presence of God is not determined by the humanly perceived importance of earthly positions of authority, nor by cultic and ritualistic activities, but rather through the mysterious workings of God in relation to those whom God chooses to approach. As with Cameron et al. Terrien’s model has assisted me in making sense of voices in terms of their origins within the YMCA and the experientially based cultural assumptions that follow the position of authority that a particular voice might hold.

The *attitudinal* themes that I describe mirror those identified by Berryman (2009) who considers the status of children in the history of Christian theology and the work of theologians. Of significance, are the categories of description that he uses to articulate a *de facto* theological conversation on the subject. He defines the responses to children in terms of *ambiguity*, *ambivalence*, *indifference* and *grace*. These categories are very helpful in developing an understanding of the attitudes of participants towards the Christian basis.

### **A Thoughtful Process of Refinement**

Booth, Colomb and Williams (1995, pp. 36-48) describe research as the process of initially converting a general interest into a broad topic of interest and then focussing down into a narrow topic. This early refined topic is then converted into a group of possible research questions and then, finally, into a key research question. In the next section I describe how I have applied this process in my research beginning with a description of the broad working environment and my general interest in which my research is located. I describe the uncertainty that is common to many contemporary organisations and I provide the context and issues pertinent to charitable faith-based organisations, that concur with my broad topic.

Within my chosen research paradigm, I am aware of the risk of allowing my influences and bias to damage the research process. However, I have attempted to incorporate Gadamer's treatment of bias and prejudice into my research, by recognising it as a legitimate but potentially significant influence in my work. Wherever I become aware of such bias, either through reflection or analysis, I attempt to describe it, its influence and the means of limiting any impact.

## **The Philosophical and Paradigmatic Implications of My Approach**

In addition to refining a broad area of interest into a specific research question, my planning activities defined my research process as qualitative. Cresswell (2007, p. 19) notes that qualitative research is characterised as “inductive, emerging and shaped by the researcher’s experience of collecting and analysing the data”. In the same section (2007, p. 19), Cresswell explains how the qualitative researcher builds their knowledge of the researched subject by “analysing the data to develop increasingly detailed knowledge” and that “research questions may change to reflect the types of questions needed to understand the research problem”. In defining the research questions for my pilot study, I referenced literature and interpreted my understanding of the YMCA against the literature review. This provided a sufficiently detailed starting point for my pilot study. However, the pilot study in turn brought a set of voices into focus which enabled me to develop my understanding and refine my research question.

In keeping with Cresswell, I describe my research journey as one of increasing layers of understanding and of stages of refinement. I also needed to define the implications of my philosophical and paradigmatic assumptions for my research. Swinton and Mowat (2006, p. 35) reference Guba’s definition of the paradigm or interpretative framework as “the net that contains the researcher’s epistemological, ontological and methodological premises”.

The important underlying epistemological consideration that needs to be taken into account when working within qualitative research, according to Swinton and Mowat (2006, p. 35), is *constructivism*, which is the ontological presumption of multiple realities constructed by communities and individuals. This exemplifies the close relationship that the qualitative researcher has with the researched topic as co-creator in the quest for meaning and understanding (2006, p. 37).

My pilot study enabled a number of voices from one YMCA to infuse my understanding of the organisation and to add a layer of complexity over the products of the literature review. The overall result was that I held a jointly defined group of understandings in tension with the participants and literature. This enabled me in turn, to refine and adjust my research question in preparation for the wider research project.

The axiological position taken in qualitative research is one where there is recognition of the value-rich and bias-laden nature of the research conversation between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007, p. 17). No longer is value and bias in research the statement of weak or poor methodology, but rather a position statement of the rich, complex meanings available to the research process where the individual researcher can acknowledge with confidence that the treatment of their values and biases is legitimate and permissible within a qualitative research programme.

Rather than drawing on nomothetic knowledge, my qualitative research is dependent on the acquisition of ideographic knowledge, thereby building the knowledge of meaning through engagement with unique, singular experiences (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p.



43). Ideographic knowledge does not demonstrate replicability, falsifiability and generalisability (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p. 41). Superficially, this might seem to be a disadvantage, but in researching my subject where individuals share sophisticated, unique and variable understandings of highly subjective matters including faith, motivation and spirituality, this type of approach is able to cope with layered variability.

In general terms, the concept of narrative research interpretation might have been applicable to my research except that it tends to be applied to singular narratives (Chase in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, pp. 652-680). My intention was to collect a range of narratives and place them together within an interpretative framework and therefore a singular narrative research programme would not suffice. Creswell (2007, p. 57) notes that “whereas a narrative study reports the life of a single individual, a phenomenological study describes the meaning for several individuals of their life experiences of a concept or phenomenon”.

A history of phenomenology is beyond the scope of this study. However, Ihde (1971, pp. 3-5) succinctly describes two of the main streams of post-Schleiermachian development, namely a) transcendental phenomenology (focussed on the life of thought), promoted by Husserl, and b) existential phenomenology (focussed on lived experience) promoted by Merleau-Ponty (Ihde, 1971, p. 4). Ihde suggests that a significant philosophical development occurred when Heidegger and Ricoeur both promoted the developments in hermeneutical phenomenology by raising the issue of language over and above the perceptualist focus of earlier phenomenology. Heidegger’s concept of *Dasein*, the *person in the world*, and Ricoeur’s emphasis on developing understanding of human

experiences resulted in the creative tension between phenomenology (seeking to describe things as they are) and hermeneutics (seeking to interpret lived experiences). Together, the descriptive and interpretative tensions shared between these entities provided a highly effective framework in which I was able to begin to construct, and then interpret, my research project. Van Manen (1990), Creswell (2007, p. 59) and Swinton and Mowat 2006, p. 101) describe *hermeneutic phenomenology* as a widely accepted methodology which is capable of interpreting multivalent sources of narrative by allowing for the gathering together of individual and group narratives that describe lived experiences.

My position in my research is not one of presumed neutrality. I chose to pursue a professional doctorate and did so because I wanted to research a subject that is of significance to me on a number of levels. This means that I am involved in my research not as a distant gatherer of facts or as an uninvolved observer, but as an active, interpreting participant. There are at least two ways in which this predicament might be addressed. Husserl has proposed a means of bracketing or the “suspension of a person’s beliefs and preconceptions in an attempt to look at the phenomenon as it is”. (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p. 111). I could therefore, legitimately attempt to *bracket* my situation to suspend it away from my research, but that would be in opposition to my very specific intention to research a subject in which I am immersed.

The alternative would be to reference Gadamer’s focus on the need for the researcher “to become aware of their own embeddedness or historical situatedness and for the researcher to constantly reflect on the ways in which this situatedness influences

interpretation” (Swinton and Mowat, 2006, p. 111). From this perspective, rather than bracketing one’s own beliefs and experiences, one would become more aware of personal inherent bias. Gadamer exposes the emphasised negative bias placed upon prejudice which was brought about through the Enlightenment (Gadamer, 1975, pp. 272-275; Lawn, 2006, p. 38). Gadamer suggests that all judgements are actually conditioned by pre-judgements. In bringing these existing pre-understandings to the fore in conversation one is actually creating an effective basis for a hermeneutical environment. These existing pre judgements are the essence of the individual’s unique perspectives, i.e. the individual’s unique horizon of understanding, which through this type of dialogue is expanded until meanings jointly shared with others can emerge as fused horizons. Swinton and Mowat (2006, p. 116) describe the *hermeneutical circle* as Gadamer’s final contribution in his experiential hermeneutics (Brown in Miller – McLemore, 2012, p. 112) and as the process where the scholar moves from the narrative to the individual words and back to the narrative in their interpretative process. Moving between the singular and collective is a powerful means of examining the individual meanings of words within their collective context and in gaining deeper understanding of the collective whole.

In my research design and implementation, I applied my understanding of hermeneutical phenomenological processes to gather and record personal narratives from individuals. The use of a mixed-methods approach created different stages in my research programme. This choice served three purposes: a) scaling up from the pilot to the wider research programme; b) stepping up and down between less complex and more complex methods; and c) creating opportunities to place data from different

sources alongside each other to highlight where points of singularity, opposition and unity existed. Through these mixed methods, participants were encouraged to share their perceptions and pre-judgements with me as well as to enter into dialogue within group settings and in one-to-one sessions. The result was a rich collection of narrative descriptions and interpretations with which I could, as a *research instrument*, enter into dialogue for the purposes of developing shared understandings and the creation of meanings. In the following section I describe how I brought the various parts of my research together into a cohesive report through an adaption of the process of triangulation. Bryman (2002, p. 1) defines triangulation as “the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings”. Denzin (1978, p. 291) describes triangulation as “the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon.” Flick (2009, p. 467) expands on this form of definition: “triangulation as a keyword is used to name the combination of different methods, study groups, local and temporal settings and different theoretical perspectives in dealing with a phenomenon”.

Yin (2009, p. 114) suggests that a strength in data collection for case studies lies in the researcher’s ability to access different sources of evidence. Flick (2009, pp. 466-468) refers to Denzin’s four types of triangulation: a) data triangulation which makes use of different data sources; b) investigator triangulation with different observers and interviewers; c) theory triangulation where multiple theories are set against each other; and d) methodological triangulation, which is subdivided into *within-method* (using for example sub-scales) and *between-method* triangulation where the researcher might make use of tools such as questionnaires and interviews.

For my research in the YMCA, I applied the latter model of *between-method* triangulation which I now describe in more detail in the following section. I used a mixed set of research tools including questionnaire-led interviews, small case studies, group discussions and web-based research. I define my matrix response as a *dialectic towards meaning*. The Oxford Dictionary (2013) defines dialectic as “the art of investigating or discussing the truth of opinions.” In keeping with Gadamer’s position, I suggest that the qualitative data I have gathered in conversation with participants is built on their perceptions of truth which are unique and specific to them.

There are elements of contradiction within that assemblage of data and these require a dialectical engagement in order to make sense of them in terms of meaning. I have linked these components together into an overarching framework that draws on the concept of triangulation as a means of creating a counterpoint between separate sources of data.

In Figure Three (below) I present a visual interpretation of how my data was subjected to a limited form of *between-method* triangulation utilising a qualitative focus. The identified understandings recorded in a pilot study in one YMCA focussed on application and meaning. These were considered by other local YMCAs and in self-selected peer groups. This resulted in plausible propositions focussed on performance, relationships and the exploration of meanings by peers. Plausible propositions were used to produce a position statement of understanding for the meaning of the YMCA’s Christian basis.

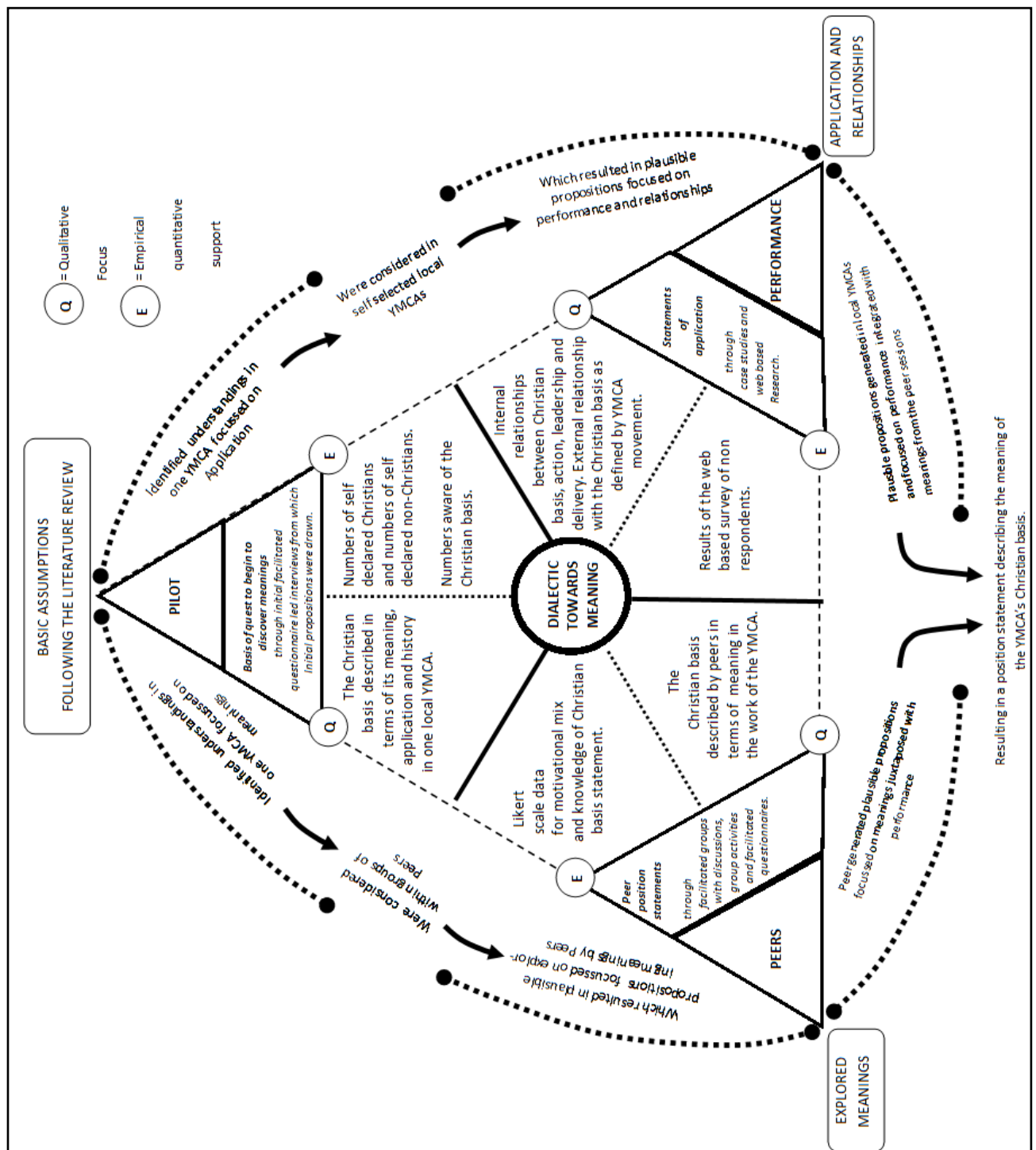


Figure Three: My Triangulated Dialectic Oriented Towards Meaning.

### **The Definition of Qualitative Research as the Chosen Method**

McLeod suggests that “the primary aim of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of how the social world is constructed” (2001, p. 2). He describes qualitative research as a process of careful, rigorous inquiry into aspects of the social world and one that produces “formal statements or conceptual frameworks that provide new ways of understanding that world, and therefore comprises knowledge that is useful for those who work with issues around learning and adjustment to the pressures and demands of the social world” (2001, p. 3).

McLeod describes three categories of knowledge that are obtained through qualitative research. Of particular significance in my research is one of McLeod’s categories: “knowledge of phenomena” (2001, p. 3) where a researcher takes a category of person of interest and describes, analyses and interprets the world views and experiences and language of groups which represent that category. Within my research, I described, analysed and interpreted the voices of people who share a relationship with the YMCA and I described their interest in the Christian basis. I gathered the views and experiences of representative groups and individuals that are from within the YMCA to create new ways of understanding their relationship with the Christian basis.

The definition provided by Denzin and Lincoln reinforces the relevance of qualitative research for my research process. They describe qualitative research as “multi method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach” and “this means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (1998, p. 3).

In designing my research process, I paid close attention to the necessity for facilitated opportunities in which people could share the meanings that they attach to the YMCA and its Christian basis. As suggested by Swinton and Mowat (2006, p. 29), I used a variety of methods and approaches in a number of *in situ* YMCA settings to “explore and understand the unique ways that individuals and communities inhabit” the YMCA. These are described in the following paragraphs in overarching terms. I undertook the pilot study in the YMCA in Rotherham followed by a wider second-stage research programme, which included working with groups representing a range of roles in the English YMCA movement, working with individual YMCAs and holding a workshop at a conference focussed on Christian spirituality.



### **CHAPTER THREE: THE PILOT STUDY**

The pilot study was concerned with organisational perspectives of the Christian basis, spirituality and inclusivity in a local member YMCA. In simple terms, this aimed to find out what one YMCA, as represented by its staff, volunteers and board, thought about the YMCA as a Christian-based organisation. The reason for this focus was to identify propositions that could be tested in a study incorporating a wider number of YMCAs. The meaning of the Christian basis is central in my research, but in order to contextualise a conversation about it, it was important to consider what other ancillary influences there might be. The pilot study provided the means to identify motivational and de-motivational factors within understandings of spirituality and the influence of organisational inclusivity on the Christian basis.

The research question utilised in the pilot study materialised following a period of reflection and engagement with the results of the literature review and following discussions with my academic supervisor and colleagues in the YMCA:

**“Does the YMCA respond effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society while maintaining its Christian basis?”**

In preparation for the pilot study, a set of sub-questions were identified which could be used to inform my research process in the pilot. To do this I needed to define the constituent parts of the question. For example the Christian basis is both an internal culturally constructed motivation and a goal in terms of its application while the meeting of spiritual needs is another goal. The question contains a mix of motivations and goals

within the context of the local YMCA, an organisation which is a social construction. This is in accordance with Mouzelis' definition (1967, p. 4), as referenced by Hartwig (1983, p. 28), of the "formal organisation as a form of social grouping established in a more or less deliberate or purposive manner for the attainment of a specific goal". Therefore, the YMCA's specific goals are achieved by people in the organisation associating their efforts together through a broad group of motivations, some of which are shared between groups of individuals. These motivations are culturally dependent as suggested by D'Andrade and Strauss, who note that "motivation depends on cultural messages and is realised in social interaction" (1992, p. 1). This means that there is an important link between the culture, social interaction and motivations within the YMCA. In using this framework I identified four sub questions:

- I. Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?
- II. What does the YMCA determine to be spirituality and spiritual needs?
- III. Does the YMCA respond inclusively?
- IV. Does the YMCA respond effectively?

My chosen data collection method for the pilot study was the questionnaire-led structured interview which I undertook with a cross-section of staff, volunteers and trustees. In keeping with Tracy's description of interviews, I decided to employ the interview method because the nature of the questions that I had produced were reliant on reflection and explanation (2012, pp. 189-190).

Given the subjective nature of some of my material, e.g. spirituality and the anticipated variability in responses to questions, I wanted to provide sufficient time in the interviews to allow participants to explore and converse with me about the questions and in so doing to recall their past memories and events (Tracy, 2012, p. 190).

Tracy (2012, p. 197) notes that “structured interviews generally use an interview schedule and a list of questions that are repeated in the same order and in the same wording” so interview times were scheduled with participants and they received the questions a day before the interviews in order to familiarise themselves with the questions. Interviews were an average of 20 minutes, the longest was 40 minutes and the shortest was 11 minutes. This variability was partly indicative of the open structure which enabled participants to say as little or as much as they felt comfortable with.

In determining my sample size, reference was made to Kvale’s advice, which is to identify “as many as necessary to find out what you need to know” (1996, p. 101). Given the resources available to undertake the pilot study and information from research colleagues about the amount of time needed to process research data, it was agreed to sample between a third and half of my YMCA’s associated group of 26 people, including board members, senior staff, operational staff and volunteers. At the time of conducting the research, my YMCA employed 14 staff together with four regular volunteers and eight Board members. On this basis, it appeared reasonable that interviews with up to 13 people would provide a sufficiently wide range of responses to the research questions. I was able to engage 12 participants for the pilot study.

Ethical approval was obtained and a group of participants were recruited from a cross-section of the YMCA in accordance with the methodology suggested by Trafford and Leshem (2008, p. 94). This resulted in a design that engaged key voices in my local YMCA so that I could identify their perspectives on my subject. In turn my pilot study was able to provide “plausible statements about the possibilities and probabilities” as described by Knight in his reference to the value of small samples in small-scale research (2000, p. 120). On completion of the primary coding stage, data was interpreted into themes as described by Tracy (2012, p. 271), who notes that “rather than simply mirroring the data, second level codes serve to explain, theorise and synthesise them. Second level coding includes interpretation and identifying patterns, rules, or cause effect progressions.”

The interviews contained five sections: locus, spirituality, Christian basis, inclusivity and general comments (please refer to Appendix Seven for the sample questionnaire). The locus and general sections were vital in setting candidates at ease, in giving them opportunities to reflect on the interview and to add any additional information. The three main interview sections for Christian basis, spirituality, and inclusivity provided the information to begin to answer the first three sub-questions; the fourth question, on effectiveness, was answered through further analysis. I obtained permission from the interviewees to record the interviews and I made notes during the interviews.

In terms of analysis, I read and reread the sources of data in conjunction with my own notes and began to identify codes, which Saldana (2009, p. 3) defines to be “summative, salient, essence - capturing, and /or evocative attributes for language based or visual data”. I then produced a code list which provided for my first or primary coding and applied these to the data.

The codes that I derived for the motivational statements included: children and young people, philanthropy, Christianity and other. The charitable objects were coded as affirmative, challenging or secularising. Activities undertaken by the YMCA were coded as Christian-based, service based, governance based, not what the YMCA does or other.

Engagement with the concept of spirituality was based on a further development of my original “drivers and corollaries” model conceived in my literature review. In its original form, the drivers are defined by the person’s upbringing, life experiences, expectations and worldview; the corollaries are the resultant implications located within the definition. They are the expressions used by the individual to communicate their understanding of how their spirituality functions in everyday life. I defined four broad categories: *Journey and Change*, *Experience and Reflection*, *Relationship and Community*, and *Narratives and Meaning*. These categories may be dependent on the context of the language, aims and motivation of the individual. The four categories are not mutually exclusive and there may be areas of crossover.

## **Thematic Report**

### **The Christian Basis is Both a Key Motivation and a De-Motivation**

Application of my framework provided thematic descriptions of the motivations and de-motivations within the pilot study. A reasonable assumption had been that the dominant motivation ought to be the Christian basis and a strong goal its application. However, this was not shown to be true in the pilot study. The strongest motivation recorded was the desire to work with young people in ways that improve their lives. The majority of participants (nine of twelve) noted that the Christian basis was important, but not as a personal motivator for their work. In terms of my framework, this suggests that the cultural messages cemented within social interactions within the pilot study did not include one that made sense of the Christian basis.

The Christian basis was noted as a significant de-motivation or limitation in certain circumstances including effective fundraising and anti-discrimination behaviour. It was suggested that the Christian basis could not be mentioned openly in funding bids and that most clients would feel marginalised if they knew of and understood the first two overtly Christian charitable objects. One participant said “I don’t want to do the Christian basis stuff and if I had to, I’d leave”. Inclusivity was accepted by all participants as one of the few contemporary universally acceptable goals central to the work of the YMCA. It also featured as an interpretation of the Christian basis that participants could accept. One participant’s comment on inclusivity was: “the Christian basis is much more obvious when people just get on and work together”.

### **The Christian Basis has an Unexplained Authority with an Intermittent but Often Veiled Presence**

Attitudes towards the Christian basis were strongly influenced by whether participants defined themselves as Christians or not. While this was not one of the direct questions asked in the interviews, most participants felt it necessary to speak about their own relationship with Christianity at points during the interview. The majority of participants did not recall an occasion when the Christian basis had been explained to them.

Irrespective of whether they considered themselves to be Christian, or of other or no faith, the majority of participants found it difficult to interpret the Christian basis other than in general terms. For non-Christians the Christian basis was historical, largely irrelevant to the work of the YMCA or as something to be honoured at a distance as held by the board. Statements from participants included÷ “the Christian basis makes no sense to me” and “the Christian basis can be infiltrated and taken over if it isn’t properly understood”. Its presence would be sensed intermittently through veiled references or superficial discussions.

### **The Christian Basis is an Historical Artefact and a Legacy**

The self-declared minority of Christians emphasised the need to acknowledge the history of the YMCA's Christian basis as a legacy meant for reinvestment in current and future times. Those who described themselves as active Christians felt that the two overtly Christian charitable objects were central to the work of the YMCA and had been set in place when the organisation was created, but they also wanted to see evidence of the application of the Gospel in the YMCA's work. It was evident that the Christians felt that the Christian basis was not being applied. Older, self-defined Christian participants shared recollections of past activities that were designed by the YMCA or in partnership with churches that demonstrated the Christian basis openly.

The majority of participants defined themselves as non Christians, but were nevertheless sympathetic of the Christian basis as far as they understood it, given that it had not been explained to most participants. While the Christian basis was not referenced as a shared motivating factor, its importance was acknowledged as a historical motivation that was no longer needed and not well understood; it was something made by the YMCA in a different time, an artefact to be admired for its historical value. One person stated÷  
“This [the Christian basis] is what the YMCA used to do, but it's not needed anymore”.  
Almost all participants said that the Christian basis had never been explained to them and that they found it difficult to interpret in the work currently undertaken by the YMCA. One participant noted that “ We all need to better understand the Christian basis so that we can work more effectively”.



### **Generic Spirituality is Detached from the Charitable Intention**

Spirituality was largely recognised and defined in various ways as representing a deeply reflective backdrop or the focus on action inherent in the Christian basis statement.

Spirituality was also defined as a lifestyle choice, a mix of things and perhaps a relationship with God. Spirituality was a mostly described generically where the YMCA's role was identified as developing resilience partly by physical and other activities, but also in meeting spiritual needs and to explore spirituality. This concurs with Hay and Nye's suggestion (1998, p. 20) that "modern Western assumptions" have created an overlay that "turns spirituality from something explicitly reflected upon to something implicit and vague".

Participants defined Rotherham's YMCA as meeting spiritual needs but they did not define how this could be done or that it was being done. They felt that none of the current programmes and services actively meets these needs. One participant noted that ÷ "Spiritual needs ought to be met in the YMCA, but they aren't". No participants made a link between the charitable object that overtly references spiritual education and spirituality. This correlates with a lack of explanation and interpretation of the charitable objects in general. One participant said: "We don't do the spiritual, but we do the others [charitable objects]".

In summary, the pilot study suggested that participants thought of spirituality in a mixed set of categories. Self-defined Christians suggested that spirituality concerned Christian salvation and the soul. Other participants who defined themselves as having no faith spoke of otherness, defining spirituality in broadly sociological terms. *Christian*

*spirituality, spirituality and spiritual education* did not feature as being important in service delivery in the pilot study. The pilot study also revealed that *spirituality* and *spiritual education* are interpreted in the context of a general, non religious understanding. The data from the pilot study suggested that there was no active engagement with services that might identify the existence of any spiritual needs. It also identified that there was no provision available to address spirituality in the YMCA accessed for the pilot study.

### **Plausible Possibilities and Probabilities Arising from the Pilot**

The initial thematic interpretations initially resulted in the following six propositional statements:

*Statement one: the relationship between the Christian basis and spirituality is complex.*

*Statement two: spiritual education is not proactively catered for in the pilot YMCA.*

*Statement three: the overwhelming motivation in the pilot YMCA is care for young people.*

*Statement four: a lack of spiritual education limits the delivery of well-rounded youth work.*

*Statement five: the Christian basis statement is not very well understood.*

*Statement six: in the pilot YMCA, the implementation of the Christian basis creates tensions.*

In reflecting on these propositional statements, it became clear that while the statements had been derived through thematic interpretation, they could be refined and simplified as a precursor to the main study. This process of refinement was undertaken within a review of the pilot study as reported in the next section.

### **Review of the Pilot Study to Inform the Research.**

In the normal course of testing my research statements, I reviewed my data including the interview notes, transcriptions and my primary coded results. I compared this reading with my six propositional statements and recognised that as a set they could be simplified, as summarised in Table Two below.

STATEMENT	REVIEWED MEANING	TREATMENT
Statement One: The relationship between the Christian basis and Spirituality is complex.	The focus on “complexity” is not sufficiently defined.	Incorporate into the statement on spirituality and into the statement on the Christian basis.
Statement Two: Spiritual education is not proactively catered for in the pilot study YMCA.	This is reporting of the data, but needs to be more contextual within the discussion of spirituality.	Incorporate into the statement on spirituality.
Statement Three: The overwhelming motivation in Chantry YMCA is care for Young People.	This is reporting of the data, but needs to be more contextual within the discussion of the Christian basis as a motivational factor.	Incorporate into the statement on the Christian basis.
Statement Four: A lack of spiritual education limits the delivery of well-rounded youth work.	This suggests a stronger link between spirituality and youth work than the data can support and, while justifiable from other data, it ought to be limited to the context of spiritual education.	Remove this statement.
Statement Five: The Christian basis Statement is not very well understood.	This is reporting of the data, but needs to be more contextual within the discussion of the Christian basis.	Incorporate into the statement on the Christian basis.
Statement Six: In the pilot study YMCA, the implementation of the Christian basis creates tensions.	This is reporting of the data, but needs to be more contextual within the discussion of the Christian basis and needs to be defined in terms of inclusivity.	Incorporate into the statement on the Christian basis.  Provide a more explicit statement on inclusivity.

**Table Two: Review, Refinement and Treatment of the Original Six Propositional Statements.**

In essence I was able to distil the original six propositional statements down into three more descriptive propositional statements in accordance with the main thematic categories used in the interviews, namely: Christian basis, Spirituality and Inclusivity.

## **Christian Basis**

The complexity in the relationships between the Christian basis and especially spirituality stem in part from the relative definitions, or lack of definitions, for each.

Without clear shared understandings of these concepts it is difficult for YMCA people to determine the ways in which the Christian basis might be implemented or acted upon. In particular, the concept of spirituality was described in various often nebulous ways by participating delivery staff in particular. They simply wanted to help young people and had not been presented with overt requests to meet spiritual needs. The Christian basis did not feature highly as a motivational factor for most participants. In taking these reflections into account, I was able to produce a more meaningful proposition for the Christian basis:

**Statement One: The Christian basis is perceived as complex in terms of: a) different understandings of what it means; b) the tensions created in attempting to implement it; c) differences of opinion on how it relates to service delivery; d) relevance; e) its limited merit as a motivational factor in the work of the YMCA and f) its relationship with the charitable objects.**

## **Spirituality**

Spirituality and spiritual needs are recognised and accepted as concepts of importance by YMCA people who participated in the pilot study. However, there is no structured organisational response in the same way that there is for meeting other needs and they are therefore addressed on an *ad hoc* basis. There is no proactive delivery of services to address the spiritual needs of clients, staff or volunteers. Spiritual education is not proactively catered for in the local YMCA. The relationship between the Christian basis and spirituality is complex in the sense that spirituality is accepted as a relatively benign concept, but the Christian basis is more difficult to articulate because it has connotations attached that are sometimes religiously hued and negative, as Hay and Nye (1998, p. 6) identified in their investigation of the relationship between spirituality and religion. This reflection enabled me to produce a more succinct proposition concerning spirituality:

**Statement Two: Spiritual education is not proactively catered for in terms of**  
**a) the requirements of the charitable object to provide such education for**  
**young people and b) a uniform YMCA response for staff and volunteers.**

## **Inclusivity**

The YMCA in Rotherham appears to consider the YMCA to be inclusive. Participants in the pilot study almost universally identified the YMCA as welcoming to all as far as services and their delivery is concerned. However, comments were made about the first two charitable objects (faith-based) being exclusive due to the possibility of interpreting them as requiring proselytising. There were references to the need for the Christian basis not to be watered down and for the source of inclusivity to be made more explicit i.e. the Christian basis. Most of the responses that referenced a Christian context and all those that made no faith reference did not highlight a conflict between the enactment of the Christian basis and inclusivity.

**Statement Three: The YMCA is perceived as being an inclusive organisation a) in terms of the delivery of services and b) the two overt faith-based objects are ignored at a service level.**

## **My Response to the Pilot Research Question**

In answer to the question “Does the local YMCA respond effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society while maintaining its Christian basis?”, the position statement provided by this pilot study is:

The YMCA in Rotherham is more confident in responding inclusively and effectively to the physical and emotional needs of young people, but less so where spiritual needs are encountered. While the Christian basis can be seen to be evident textually, it is only partially discernible culturally and this is almost exclusively at the board level. It is not

overtly visible in service delivery or understood as a significant motivational force by staff. It is not communicated consistently and this is in part due to a degree of confusion about its nature, partly due to a lack of a shared definition and application.

## **Review of the Research Question in Light of the Pilot Study**

The pilot study was built around a question that sought to identify the relationship between the Christian basis, spirituality and inclusivity. The focus was on meeting spiritual needs and the assumption was that the Christian basis would be enacted anyway. The question read:

**“Does the YMCA respond effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society while maintaining its Christian basis?”**

However, both the pilot study and historical survey highlighted the centrality of the Christian basis as the key link between the current work of the YMCA and its history. The pilot study also showed that the Christian basis, while widely accepted conceptually, was not a key motivational force in the pilot study YMCA. It also revealed a detachment between the charitable objects and spirituality as understood conceptually in the YMCA. Inclusivity was accepted universally as important by people of faith and of none. The historical survey indicated how significant the Christian basis had been as a key motivational driver in the early YMCA. The historical survey also revealed the dynamic nature of the relationship between four organisations and their historical faith bases. Each of the four, including the YMCA, demonstrated a historical tendency to make



repeated attempts to define the relationship. Each demonstrated a different corporate response in contemporary circumstances. The importance of the Christian basis in the YMCA is located in whether the collective orientation of the people in the organisation is towards maintaining the Christian basis or not in the face of internal and external pressures. For example, Tacey (2004, pp. 106-122) reports that a change in the perceived meaning of faith and spirituality is rolling out describing it as the “tyranny of the secular” (2004, p. 108) and suggests that for many people their journey from childhood to adulthood is marked by a decreasing engagement and trust in the religious and that for some young people they choose to replace this loss with a search for some form of authentic spirituality, but one that is personal and inwardly experienced. Heelas and Woodhead (2005, p. 2) refer to the “major cultural shift of which we all have some experience that turns away from the external objective life towards a life lived by subjective experience”. From this perspective it was important that my research reflected the essence of the contemporary challenge of making sense of the meaning of the Christian basis. In taking all this into account I restructured the research question in such a way as to emphasise the necessary changes, but in a way that protected the validity of the plausible propositions from the pilot study. Therefore, the research question for use in the wider study was defined as:

### **What Meaning Does the YMCA Attribute to its Christian basis?**

### **Limitations of the Pilot Study**

As a qualitative, inductive, small-scale study this pilot study relied on a typical small, non-representative sample from the English YMCA movement. Nevertheless, the sample within the YMCA in Rotherham was locally viable. Gathering the data was time-consuming and the results are not intended for generalisation. However, these limitations provided a very useful means of starting the research project in a safe and controlled way. The results of the pilot study have produced a set of propositions for testing in the wider research project and this process is more rigorous and directional than if I had singularly based the research project on the literature review alone.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: THE SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH PROGRAMME**

### **An Overview of the Research Process**

In this section I summarise, by means of an overview, the various components of my whole research programme. The data collected from each of these sources has assisted me in my task of interpretation, but each of these was designed to achieve a specific purpose as follows in Table Three.

Having defined my broad research topic as well as my specific research question I opted to utilise a pilot study to provide further refinement of my research question and to gather my first set of data in a local YMCA. Analysis of the data collected from interviews with 12 participants from one local member YMCA in the pilot study did result in a more refined research question as well as a set of propositions that I was able to apply in the rest of the research project. These propositions were applied as described in the following four paragraphs.

A cross-section of 31 people from 23 YMCAs across England participated in two facilitated groups. Their task was to articulate their understanding of the meaning of the Christian basis. They took part in facilitated discussions with the aid of workbooks which helped them to identify their understanding of links between spirituality, faith, motivation and the YMCA's Christian basis statements.

The meanings attributed to the Christian basis by these two groups were juxtaposed with the application of the Christian basis and the relationships with the Christian basis identified by individual YMCAs. Another facilitated group of 11 people identified and explored expressions of the Christian basis that might be communicable to those outside the YMCA. This group reflected upon the Christian basis and how it's meaning might be communicated.

The propositions were applied to a set of five self-selected local member YMCAs where the chairs or CEOs were of the view that they were confident to engage in a discussion about the Christian basis in the YMCA because they were actively attempting to interpret it locally in various ways. Twenty-six people participated in these field visits which enabled me to identify aspects of the performance of the Christian basis in YMCAs.

A survey of the Charity Commission's web registration pages and local YMCA websites across the English YMCA helped to identify a range of data including what YMCAs noted about the Christian basis, the relationship between the Christian basis and the charitable objects and what local YMCA's represent to the public through their websites. The application of the Christian basis within the context of local delivery and the relationships that determine the nature of integration of the Christian basis into services were compared to the explored meanings identified by the peer groups. In the following sections I address each of the research units in turn and I describe the process and findings in detail in the next set of chapters.

Research Unit	Research Tools	Specific Purpose of This Element	Types of Data Gathered	Contribution to the Whole	Means of Data Collection	Primary Descriptive Coding	Secondary Analytic Coding
<i>Pilot Study</i>  Built on the basic assumptions from the literature review.	Questionnaire led interviews.	To begin to explore the Christian basis with reference to one local YMCA.	a) Qualitative statements of understanding b) Qualitative proportional data.	This formed the basis of the quest to begin to inform meanings.	a) Recordings and Transcriptions. b) Interview notes.	1) Empirical data covering the organisational demographic. 2) Descriptive categories based on groupings of responses within the parameters of individual questions.	1) Cross reference between organisational demographic and descriptive categories. 2) Identification of strong reoccurring themes. 3) Identification of outlier themes.
<i>Performance Study</i>  Focussing on the application of the Christian basis and local relationships.	Case studies.  Web based research.	To produce statements of understanding from staff in local YMCA's about local practical interpretations of the Christian basis.	c) Case study reports. d) Qualitative proportional data from analysis of web information.	This produced case study reports which describe the local interpretation and application of the Christian basis.	c) Question lists used in guided interviews. d) Case studies. e) Data from Web surveys.	3) Case study reports with narrative descriptions. 4) Grouping of web survey responses.	4) Synthesis of case studies and web responses to identify strong themes and outlier themes. 5) Identification of aspects of practice judged by participating YMCAs to be successful.
<i>Peer Study</i>  Focussed on exploring the meanings attached to Christian basis language in the YMCA.	Group discussions.  Group activities facilitated through questionnaires.	To produce statements from cross sections of YMCA people about their understanding of the Christian basis.	e) Qualitative statements of understanding. f) Qualitative proportional data from Likert scale based activities.	This delivered a plurality of position statements created through conversations held by groups representing cross sections of the YMCA.	f) Recordings and Transcriptions. g) Group work recording sheets. h) Likert scales. i) A creative workshop recorded with photographs and rich descriptions.	5) Empirical data covering the group demographic. 6) Driver and Corollary coding. 7) Descriptive categories based on groupings of responses.	6) Identification of strong themes arising from the group discussions. 7) Identification of outlier themes from the group discussions. 8) Themes arising from the Driver and Corollary coding.

**Table Three: Components of my Research Programme.**

## **Description of Methods**

### **Ethical Issues and Approval**

This research relied on a range of different points of contact and engagement in which participants were asked to share their perspectives on a range of subjects. Some of these views might be sensitive and possibly controversial. I needed to be aware of various sensitivities in each of the sessions. For example, some participants might feel uncomfortable talking about faith-related issues or they might be anxious about appearing ignorant about the YMCA's faith basis or other subjects. My role as a senior staff member contributed to these challenges, particularly when speaking with other staff who were not senior managers. I also had to make allowances that some participants might view me as a researcher working to unearth non-Christian practices or something similar. Participants might also worry about having their roles threatened if they said the "wrong" thing or found that their statements caused them to be in a minority view position.

In response to these ethical dilemmas I ensured that the following controls were put in place and all these points were reiterated at the end of the session:

- All invitations and written briefings made it clear that I was undertaking this research on behalf of the YMCA movement in England and not on behalf of one specific YMCA.
- At the beginning of each session I read out a statement which defined the research; assured participants of anonymity; enabled them to leave the process at any time; assured them that their contributions would not be traceable; and clarified that the research was focussed on gathering a collective position statement of as many views as possible and that it was not focussed on promoting a Christian or other perspective.
- In the facilitated groups, workbooks were given out to help the discussion and also to enable individuals who wanted to inform the process, but were not confident enough, for whatever reason, to make their point in the group. I stressed the point that only I would have access to the workbooks and that they were not traceable back to individuals.
- I asked participants to attempt to accept that in my capacity as a researcher I was not acting as a senior staff member and would not be discussing any individual or their views outside of the research process and production of the thesis.

I ensured that the ethical controls were compliant with the appropriate standards.

Ethical approval was obtained from the university prior to the start of research activities and I did not deviate from the approved plan. Prospective participants were reassured

that their participation would be voluntary and that they could withdraw or step out at any time. They were asked to voluntarily sign consent forms and these were explained prior to signing. No participant was bribed, nor did any participant receive payment or inducement and no participant was placed in a compromising position of putting their job or role at risk by participating in the research. I employed appropriate controls such as making sure that all response forms, case studies and records were designed to be anonymous and were completed in such a way. I maintained a coding list separately from the records. All paper records have been maintained in secure storage. All computer records are subject to password control and up-to-date secure, anti-virus software.

## **Sampling**

I utilised a flexible, responsive and opportunistic sampling plan to address some of the challenges that occur when undertaking research within a federated structure such as the YMCA. The sampling plan needed to accommodate the fact that the YMCA has numerous power structures where each local YMCA is its own authority and could choose to participate or not. I had to appeal to local YMCAs or take opportunities to interact in situations where groups of YMCA staff would be present from a range of YMCAs. In effect I was able to opportunistically combine both the appeal to the local YMCAs and interactions with groups of intra-YMCA people.



While it would have been very useful in the full research project to interview all the board members, senior staff, operational staff and volunteers in the YMCA movement (all voices) this would be too expensive; it would take too long and would be logistically difficult. The research process evolved considerably over the course of the research programme. The best compromise was to identify representative persons and local YMCAs in a limited, but open way to provide a set of voices in the YMCA.

Table Four below presents the key sample information for the overall research project. Seventy people from 37 YMCAs took part in facilitated groups , field visits, interviews and email surveys. In addition, 19 non-respondent YMCAs were subject to a website survey and 126 YMCAs were surveyed with reference to the Charities Commission website.

FACILITATED GROUPS , FIELD VISITS, INTERVIEWS AND EMAIL SURVEYS										
Sample and Data	People	Male	Female	Trustee	CEO	Senior Manager	Staff	Volunteer	Age	No. of Participating YMCAs
Focus Group One	19	9	10	3	5	5	4	2	20-70	16
Focus Group Two	12	7	5	3	2	3	2	2	20 -50	7
Focus Group Three	11	7	4	2	1	1	2	1	30-50	7
YMCA Field Study One	4	3	1	0	1	2	0	1	20-50	1
YMCA Field Study Two	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	20-50	1
YMCA Field Study Three	16	10	6	2	1	2	1	10	20-60	1
YMCA Field Study Four	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	30-50	1
YMCA Field Study Five	2	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	30-50	1
YMCA Telephone Interview	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	30-50	1
YMCA Email Survey	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	30-50	1
<b>TOTALS FOR PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>37</b>

WEB SURVEY ACTIVITIES										
Sample and Data	People	Male	Female	Trustee	CEO	Senior Manager	Staff	Volunteer	Age	No. of Participating YMCAs
Non-Respondent Web Survey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	19
National Charity Commission Web Survey	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	126
<b>TOTALS FOR WEB SURVEY ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>145</b>

**Table Four: Collated Summary of the Sample.**

Invitations to participate differed according to the data collection activity:

- 1) Two structured discussion and written feedback groups (Group 1 N=19; Group 2 N=12) were opportunistic samples of YMCA staff and volunteers who were participating in conferences to receive training and input into the YMCA's quality assurance programme.

I delivered a workshop in each with activities to facilitate discussion about the meaning of the YMCA's Christian basis. (Point 1, Data Collection Methods, Page 124 summarises the main questions and activities.

- 2) Five YMCAs were directly observed through site visits lasting up to half a day, including interviews with 26 people. Each of these case study samples therefore comprised views and discussion from within a single YMCA. These participants were recruited by letters of invitation sent to a total of 29 YMCAs representing 100% of all the YMCAs within a 60 mile radius of South Yorkshire and representing approximately 22% of the potential population of YMCAs nationally in England. Two follow-up emails also produced one telephone interview and one email survey response. It was not possible to expand the sample further. This sample area was limited by the East and West coastal limits and by the availability of resources available to undertake the research.
- 3) However, a sample of website information was constituted by means of a web survey of all YMCAs that were invited (N=29) to participate in the site visits. Ten did not have functioning websites. This sample (N=19) of websites was reviewed in terms of references to services, mission, motivation and the Christian basis.
- 4) Furthermore, a sample of all English YMCAs (N=132) was taken to identify those registered with the Charity Commission (N=126) in order to identify the relationship between the overt Christian charitable objects and the nature of the individual charitable registrations.

- 5) For a degree of contrast, another opportunistic sample of staff and volunteers from England(8) , Scotland (1), Holland (1) and Germany (1) provided further data which provided aspects to compare and contrast with the local English samples. I was invited to run a workshop to explore the Christian basis and utilised a facilitated discussion with creative activities.

## **Data Collection Methods**

The decision to use a multi-method approach was made because it appeared to be the means which held the greatest potential for obtaining a focussed response given relatively small group sizes and typically low response rate for questionnaires, together with the complexity and subjective nature of the subject material. The research tools included facilitated groups and case studies.

### **1) Facilitated Groups (structured discussion and written feedback groups)**

Due in part to the official recognition of the pilot research, and through various conversations, I received invitations from YMCA England to participate in the programme of national and regional peer assessor conferences to deliver workshops on the Christian basis. The peer assessors are drawn voluntarily from local YMCAs across the country. The YMCA England Standards Team which manages this programme approached me and we agreed that I would deliver two separate sessions. One session would be at the annual National Peer Assessor Conference and the other would be at the Peer Assessor Regional Training Conference. What made them especially useful, was that the participants all came from a range of different YMCAs and the interaction and discussion was particularly rich because of the diversity of practice.

The design for each of the first two facilitated groups was broadly the same. I used focus-group style facilitated discussions to provide the data, with semi-structured activities and in each session the subject areas followed a path from general to specific. The slight difference between the two groups was that in the first group, participants felt confident to engage with the questions, discuss openly as one big group and respond individually. In the second group, however, participants were more comfortable discussing the questions in small groups and then responding as a group while still providing me with individual written responses.

In both facilitated groups, participants were invited to consider the questions in each activity and then discuss the subject in conference, but only if comfortable.

I prepared workbooks with all the sections and questions laid out. This acted as a guide and enabled participants to write their responses down. I also provided a visual presentation (PowerPoint) and obtained permission to record the sessions so that I could create a transcription.

The opening session was more general in which they had the option to think about spirituality in as broad a context as possible. The second session gave participants an opportunity to describe their personal motivations for working in the YMCA together with comments on general motivation in the YMCA. They were also able to explore any links between spirituality, motivation and faith.

The third activity was the most intensive. Participants were invited to look at the six statements contained in the memorandum and articles of association for the majority of YMCAs. The fourth and final activity was designed to evoke a set of reactions in the participants about their perceptions of the YMCA and its relationship with the Christian basis. It was intended as a summary and reflective activity looking back on the evening's discussions as a whole. It used a mosaic of images on a page to help participants to define aspects of the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis. Participants were encouraged to add their own graphic and narrative images too.

The third facilitated group took place in the context of a European conference focussed on the Christian basis. I was invited to run a workshop to explore the Christian basis, which created a dilemma and an opportunity. The dilemma arose because my research is focussed on the English YMCA. The issue of geographical remit meant that I could only refer to the results of the workshop anecdotally within my research. However, this opportunity enabled me to compare the English responses to data with a wider European response.

I took down notes throughout the discussions. I utilised a presentation to facilitate the session and in addition set up a separate projector to a notepad application. This was used by participants throughout the group session to record key words as they came up in discussion. This word list was then entered into a web-based package called "Wordle" to create a visual image of the discussion.

The first activity was largely focussed on orientation and motivation. Participants discussed their responses as one group. The second activity was entitled “Fly me to the Moon” and was specifically designed to fit in with the conference expectations of creative activity and participation. The participants were asked to form small groups and were given a creative task as follows:

“Your Mission: Fly to the Moon. Your job is to establish a new local YMCA. You have been invited by the local moon people to attend a ceremony to explain the YMCA’s Christian basis.” Participants had to work in pairs to create artefacts that might be used to interpret the Christian basis. Participants then presented their articles and an explanation. The final activity was the same as in the other facilitated groups. This task also provided an opportunity to reflect on the whole session.

## 2) The Field Visits

The field visits took place with five local member YMCAs. Each had its own unique format which was dictated by whatever the local YMCA wanted to show me. The invitation to each YMCA was sent to the chair and CEO because my research was focussed at the YMCA’s leadership and governance and these are the key roles in terms of decision-making. The briefing that I sent out with the invitation explained the purpose of my visit, namely to observe a) how the particular local YMCA engaged with, or did not engage with the Christian basis; b) what issues might cause difficulties in doing so; and c) any initiatives or activities that exemplified a confident response. I invited the local YMCAs to direct my visit in terms of what they wanted me to see and hear.

In preparation I collated a set of five guiding questions that formed the basis for my discussion with the local YMCAs. These questions were based on the propositions that arose from the review of the pilot study:

- What is the location of the Christian basis? (Statement One)
- What is the meaning of the Christian basis in governance and leadership?  
(Statement One and Three)
- What are the vision, mission and values? (Statement One, Two and Three)
- Are there structures and or activities which promote the Christian basis?  
(Statement One)
- How does this YMCA relate to the Church? (Statement Two)
- Are there any unique points of observation to be recorded? (General)

Prior to the visit I also reviewed the website of the particular YMCA to acquaint myself with their programmes, services and activities.

The five visits took between three and five hours each. Upon arrival at each I met with the CEO and was briefed on the programme for the meeting. I obtained permission to write notes throughout my observations. At some point during each of the visits I was given a tour of all or part of the facilities and was able to meet other staff, volunteers and trustees. Some of these meetings were one-to-one and others were group meetings. In each meeting I gave a brief explanation of my purpose for the meeting and assured the individuals of confidentiality. Throughout the meetings and observations I made short notes. Once the visits were completed I wrote up the short notes more fully



and categorised them under my six questions. These were then formed into case study reports for each visit.

### 3) The Website Survey for Non-Participatory YMCAs

Given that I was only able to visit five YMCAs out of the 29 that I approached, I took the view that a web survey would provide additional useful data. From the postal addresses that I had already obtained from the YMCA England website I was able to run web-based searches for each of the 29 YMCAs to access their websites, where such sites existed or were operable. I identified the 19 that were accessible and searched each site for references to services, mission, motivation and the Christian basis. I tabulated these and from this I was able to interpret the data.

### 4) National Charity Commission Based Survey of charitable objects

To round off my data collection process I undertook a survey of all English YMCAs that I could identify as registered with the Charity Commission. Out of 132 YMCAs, I identified 126 registrations with the Charity Commission. I used the listings from the YMCA England website to identify each charity. From this information I undertook a web search to identify the charitable registration number for each YMCA and was then able to search the Charity Commission website for the specific registration details for each YMCA including the registered charitable objects. I recorded these in tables from which I was able to interpret the data.

## **Data Analysis Methods**

In overall terms I describe the process of data analysis in accordance with Tracey (2012, p. 258) as iterative, alternating between emic or emergent and etic or existing models.

Having obtained a range of data from the various sources I undertook analysis in the following ways.

### **1) Facilitated Groups**

There were three sources of data that I collected in the facilitated group sessions, namely: workbooks completed by participants anonymously, the digital recordings of the sessions and my own notes taken during the sessions. Once the digital recordings were transcribed, I undertook initial readings and then reread them a number of times. I collated the workbooks into one main workbook report listing all the responses together for each question.

The primary categories from the pilot study were used to code the data. I chose to use the same codes as I had used in the pilot study because: a) the substantive questions were similar having been tested in the pilot study and this approach ensured a degree of continuity; and b) the coding had performed satisfactorily in the pilot study. The codes for interpreting the data concerned with motivation are children and young people, philanthropy, Christianity and other. The responses to questions about the charitable objects were coded as affirmative or challenging or secularising. Activities undertaken by the YMCA were coded as Christian-based, service based, governance based, not what the YMCA does or other.

In analysing the responses under motivation, I did, however, realise that further differentiation was possible especially in the context where motivation is so firmly associated with work in the YMCA. In reading the responses I noted that within the four broad categories it was possible to discern further sub-categories. Some participants defined spirituality for themselves and some for the 'other' than themselves. Some participants defined it in terms of deity and others did not. In response I was able to produce a set of four codes set in two couplets as follows:

#### Couplet A

I – Inwardly focussed definition, introspectively rich.

O – Outwardly focussed definition, observationally rich.

#### Couplet B

D – Focussed on deity, defined anthropomorphically.

N – Not focussed on deity, often defined experientially.

The result was primary cycle coded data that I was then able to read in conjunction with the primary coded data from my other research activities in order to identify secondary themes.

Engagement with the concept of spirituality was based on further development of my original "drivers and corollaries" model conceived in my literature review. In its original form, the drivers are defined by the person's upbringing, life experiences, expectations and worldview; the corollaries are the resultant implications located within the definition. They are the expressions used by the individual to communicate their

understanding of how their spirituality functions in everyday life. I defined four broad categories, namely journey and change, experience and reflection, relationship and community, and narratives and meaning. These categories may be dependent on the context of the language, aims and motivation of the individual. The four categories are not mutually exclusive and there may be areas of crossover between them.

The third facilitated group (UNIFY) provided data that acted as a check and comparison. The participants came from various countries and even though the majority were from England it was appropriate not to utilise the data within the core analysis, but rather to use the data to provide a series of images of the Christian basis to enrich to the research process.

## 2) Site Visits

Immediately following each field visit I wrote up a report based on my notes made during the visits. I coded these in accordance with my predetermined questions, which were designed with sufficient flexibility to enable me to record anything unusual or unique in particular visits:

1. What is the meaning of the Christian basis in governance and leadership?  
(Statement One and Three)
2. What are the vision, mission and values? (Statement One, Two and Three)
3. Are there structures or activities which promote the Christian basis? (Statement One)
4. How does this YMCA relate to the Church? (Statement Two)
5. Are there any unique points of observation to be recorded? (General)

I then grouped the data from each visit together under each question which provided primary coded data that I could begin to interpret in conjunction with the primary coded data from my other research activities in order to identify secondary themes.

### 3) Web Survey for Non-Participatory YMCAs

The data from the websites described services, mission and motivation and provided a local interpretation of the Christian basis or showed that the Christian basis was not referenced on the local website. I was able to code the data as demonstrating a bias towards overt or covert interpretations of the Christian basis or of no or limited reference. This enabled me to take a view on what local YMCAs that did not respond were presenting to the public in terms of the Christian basis.

### 4) National Charity Commission Based Survey of charitable objects

The data from this web survey provided a national image of what local YMCAs had registered as their charitable objects with the Charity Commission. The most commonly held constitution traditionally has its first two objects as overt references to the associative nature of the Christian basis. This survey enabled me to code the registrations in terms of how overt, covert or absent the references to the Christian-based objects were. This, in turn, provided an opportunity to make an interesting comparison between what the websites of the local YMCAs that I had invited to participate presented as the purpose of the charity, and what the official charitable registration recorded as the purpose.

## **Distinctive Emergent Themes from the Analysis**

In this next section I draw together a summary of all those emergent themes that are most distinctive in the research. Themes are identified for the facilitated groups, field visits and web-based surveys. Each of these provided aspects that helped build my understanding of the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis. Placed together these various understandings can be conceived of as being layered and together they helped me to form a deeper and more complete understanding.

### **Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach One: Facilitated Groups**

The facilitated groups demonstrated diversity both in terms of the geographical origins of participants and of the mix of faith and non-faith positions. The unifying factors within these groups were that; a) they were peer assessors and b) they shared a common desire to attempt to build their understanding of the Christian basis so that they could improve their ability to gather evidence during quality assurance visits to local YMCAs.

Participants were not united in their definition of the Christian basis, nor in the importance of the Christian basis in the future of the YMCA. The importance of the Christian basis was mostly described in terms of diminishing significance, but not to the point of complete irrelevance. Participants acknowledged the historical importance of the Christian basis with more confidence than they were able to do for the future of the Christian basis. By way of an illustration of how divergent the views were, one participant wrote "the Christian basis is who we are. If we lose this we cease to be who we claim to be" and another wrote "the Christian basis is not at all an essential part of what we do. In fact a [consultant's] report was written about our YMCA and it showed

that we do not operate as a Christian organisation and do not need to". Another view shared was "the Christian basis provides a historical foundation and it provides a set of values that are shared by non-Christians and these guide our forward planning".

A distinctive emergent theme was of enquiring but graceful acceptance of the imperfections and contradictions inherent in attempts to operate YMCA organisations that are charities and yet businesses; faith-based and yet focussed on secular environments; Christian-based YMCAs which are not churches but nevertheless hold charitable objects that seem to require overt proselytising when this is not what most YMCAs do. When referring to an image of a person in a thinking pose in one of the activities, one participant noted, "I'm drawn to the thinker – we don't have all the answers about the YMCA – we need to work with each other to seek them [answers]." These facilitated groups highlighted a common attempt at understanding the Christian basis, irrespective of personal motivation or interpretation. Participants generally subscribed to and were in support of the Christian basis as defined with reference to history, in the context of inclusion and through a commitment to the associative nature of the YMCA. There were Christian voices that acknowledged an understanding of the first two overt charitable objects as focussed on association in relationship with Christ for the purposes of making Christ known to young people. Nevertheless, even within those Christian voices only a minority accepted the first two objects as a call to overt proselytising. Most Christian voices had, at some point in their work within the YMCA, made the transition in interpretation of the first two charitable objects towards a relationship-based description of the charitable objects without any reference to overt proselytising.

It is reasonable to suggest that in these two facilitated groups the most common response towards the meaning of the Christian basis, irrespective of faith position and knowledge of the specific charitable objects, was one of reinterpretation of the Christian basis. For these two groups of participants the Christian basis was given the meaning of being “important to the YMCA”. It was not defined as the most important motivation in the YMCA, nor was there evidence of a distinct tie between faith position and meaning of the Christian basis. A participant wrote that “the Christian basis needs to be updated, not to be done away with, but to possibly be put it in a new context”.



### **Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Two: Field Visits**

All the participant CEOs and board members in the field visits were self-declared Christians. However, it was not my intention for the field visits to only describe those YMCAs with a confident Christian emphasis. The study was designed to encourage all the local YMCAs within the sample area to participate. The sample selected was geographical and not faith specific, but the responses to the invitation to participate in the research appear to have been exclusively made by those Christians who felt confident and willing to demonstrate their attempts at enacting a Christian emphasis. This did not mean that they were confident in having solved the challenge of Christian enactment in the YMCA, but rather that their confidence was a result of their local concerted efforts in attempting to “do something” as Christians in response to the Christian basis.

In one visit, I noted that the YMCA had invested in a specific role with a focus on Christian spiritual development. This same YMCA had rewritten the strategic plan, delivery plan and performance management system with reference to the Christian basis. The board and senior team had decided to “make the Christian basis an overt and central part of the YMCA’s work, but without it becoming an exercise in proselytising”, a quotation from a CEO. Another participant reported on how well the local YMCA and a local church worked together. Both organisations appeared comfortable in undertaking their roles and the working relationship appeared to be strong. I met with the CEO and one of the church’s senior leaders and it was clear that they had agreed to work together for the benefit of young people, without seeking to proselytise, but rather to show love and care through their actions. The church leader said in conversation: “The

YMCA has given us the opportunity to put our faith into action”. The CEO noted “[the] church knows what sort of people we work with. The church people are not fazed by the swearing and initial bad behaviour, they see past it to the young person. The young people however are baffled by the church people because their behaviour does not fit with what these young people expect of church people”.

Two main sets of voices were identified as a result of the field visits: a) the confident Christian voice and b) the quiet, barely audible or silent non-participatory voice. During visits, I often took the opportunity offered to speak with staff and volunteers. I recall during one such conversation that a junior staff member was reluctant to speak although their body language suggested that they had something to say. When the individual did eventually speak with me away from everyone and having been reassured that what they said would be anonymous, they told me that “some staff have joined us recently from another YMCA and we assumed that they would be for the Christian basis. It’s been hard to work with managers who do not favour the Christian basis.” The field visits, while demonstrating examples of excellent and dedicated Christian activity, also identified the deeper context of the relationship between YMCAs in the sample and the YMCA’s Christian basis. I learnt as much about the sample’s response to the YMCA’s Christian basis through the field visits as I did through the planning of the process and the subsequent responses and non-responses. Whereas the facilitated groups revealed a link between the Christian basis, association and inclusivity, the responses and non-responses in the field visits suggested that: a) for some local YMCAs there may be a breakdown in the willingness to participate in the movement associatively and b) for some local YMCAs the Christian basis is not a prevalent motivation. It is possible that

these local YMCAs are one representation of the quiet, barely audible or silent non-participatory voice. In terms of building my understanding of this I suggest from the data obtained in the web-based survey that those YMCAs that are less audible and confident are also less likely to make reference to the Christian basis within their websites.

The confident Christian voices were easier to identify because they were optimistic, louder and self-assured. Their confidence was evident in their understanding of the Christian basis and how they perceived God to be working in their YMCA. One highly vocal staff member suggested that the reason why the YMCA is “struggling” is because it has failed to “honour God”. This individual suggested that the way forward would be to reinstate an overt focus on Christian activities and to begin to “share the Gospel” again.

In one field visit where the relationship with the local church had broken down the CEO informed me that the church had been very vocal in criticising the YMCA for not being “truly Christian” meaning a proselytising organisation. In another YMCA the relationship with local churches was described as mostly positive, but that a certain local congregation had denounced the YMCA as not being a Christian organisation because in their view the local YMCA was described as not willing to share the Gospel overtly with its homeless clients. These voices tend to align with the category implied in Terrien’s theology of those who would link the likelihood of the presence of God in the YMCA with their interpretation of how the YMCA should behave.

### **Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Three: Website Survey of Non-Participatory YMCAs That Were Part of the Sample Group**

The purpose of the website survey of non-participatory YMCAs that were part of the field visit sample group was to identify any further insights into the relationship that non-participatory YMCAs have with the Christian basis. Of all the local YMCAs that did not participate, only two gave reasons. One suggested that the Christian basis was not of significance and that the distinctive nature of the local work was most important. The other YMCA suggested that sustainability was most important for them and that the Christian basis did not help with that. The remainder of the YMCAs were completely silent and this predominant silence was an encouragement for me to survey the websites of these local organisations.

The emergent theme is one of ambivalence and irrelevance. For non-participatory YMCAs, the Christian basis is mostly not referenced in their websites. Where it is mentioned, the reference is towards the standard YMCA England national strapline and no interpretation or context is given, and no link is made between the Christian basis and the local YMCA's vision, mission and values. This contrasts strongly with the websites of participatory YMCAs. These demonstrate concerted efforts at making the central link between vision, mission and values, the work of the YMCA and the Christian basis. While none of the websites appeared to report an overt move away from the Christian basis, as was demonstrated by the YWCA, some non-respondent YMCAs' websites made it difficult to distinguish between their stated work, aims and purposes and those of a secular youth organisation. This does not mean that what was reported on these websites was not compatible with the Christian basis. On the contrary, much of

it would also be found in most YMCAs. The point of interest was that these non-respondent YMCAs had mostly built websites without any reference to the Christian basis and did not refer to Christian governance and leadership. An example of a YMCA website that made no reference or allusion whatsoever to the YMCA's Christian basis stated "as a Y our primary focus is to help young people make a positive transition to independent adulthood, particularly at times of need". Another website provided an excellent example of an integrated approach where the website also referred to the primary focus as helping young people to develop [transition], especially when in need. The difference is that, in addition, this website states "[X] YMCA works hard to be totally inclusive within the context of a confident Christian identity. Caring for every aspect of the people we come into contact with is what we're about."

#### **Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Four: National Charity Commission Based Survey of Charitable Objects**

As a distinct “rounding off” activity I undertook a brief survey of all YMCAs in England in relation to their registrations with the Charities Commission as recorded on the Charities Commission’s website. This enabled me to determine the nature of the promissory relationship between local YMCAs and the regulatory body, irrespective of what local YMCAs reported on their own websites as their charitable purposes. I wanted to identify: a) if the local YMCA was registered as a YMCA and therefore subject to the overt Christian-based charitable objects and b) what the gap was, if any, between the official charitable registration and what the YMCA described on its website as its primary purposes.

The predominant emergent theme was one of ambiguity and indifference. All the YMCAs in England are registered with the Charities Commission and the terms of registration nearly always refer to the YMCA’s accepted standard charitable objects including the two overt Christian objects. However, a comparison of the websites of non-respondent YMCAs in my field study and their registrations on the Charities Commission website suggest a mismatch between their Christian basis registration and their vision, mission and values. Their own statements of purpose are often indifferent to the Christian basis and where references are made to it they are ambiguous. One website stated their roles as having “developed a strong reputation for giving young people a range of opportunities to build their self-confidence, make new friends and improve their ability to work with others, and to give something back to the wider community”. Another YMCA website recorded that “[X] YMCA is an independent local charity that is governed,

owned and accountable to the local community. Its board of management is made up of users of the facilities and local individuals who have an historical connection with the YMCA". The same site stated that that YMCA's values are "ethical and professional standards, responsiveness, safety, contributing positively to a multi-cultural society, meeting the needs of the communities and the provision of opportunities for growth to develop skills and confidence". All these fit very well with the outworking of the Christian basis into service delivery at which level there might be no discernible difference between a Christian-based YMCA and one that is not. The motivation may well be from different sources.

### **Distinctive Emergent Themes from Data Collection Approach Five: International Conference**

The UNIFY conference did not provide core data for my study as it was a European and overtly Christian conference and therefore a number of the participants were from outside my sample area in the English YMCA. Nevertheless, it did provide a valuable additional set of insights into the YMCA's approach to its Christian basis. Furthermore, it did provide a deeply reflective environment in which Christians from within the YMCA could think about the essence of the Christian basis and express it creatively. In self selected groups, participants created the following craft-based artefacts as visual descriptions of the YMCA's Christian basis:

- Box of Gifts: The YMCA offering care and enrichment.
- House of Jewels: The YMCA as a place of worship and expression.
- Open Door: The YMCA extending hospitality and welcoming people.
- Treasure Chest: The YMCA carrying the message of salvation.

In this chapter I presented an overview of the research process followed by a description and collation of the data sources. This enabled me to discern and present overarching themes. In the next chapter I engage with the data and themes within a theological and reflective context to provide deeper insights into the meaning of the data.



## CHAPTER FIVE: THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

### A Framework for Understanding Voices in Communication

The term “YMCA Movement Conversation” suggests that people across the YMCA are talking together about the organisation and subjects that matter to the movement in England (YMCA England, 2013b). As was noted in the historical survey (see Chapter One, Page 29ff), YMCA England has, over a period of months, been encouraging local member YMCAs to participate in this *Movement Conversation* as a means to make progress on developing the YMCA’s brand and model constitution. The current YMCA England strategy (covering 2012-2015) was developed in light of the findings from consultation with YMCAs in England – a process known as the Movement Conversation.

This *conversational* approach is central to the federated nature of the YMCA movement, but it raises some questions that I now explore as I link the *YMCA Movement Conversation* with my *voices in communication* framework. For example, what is the nature of this YMCA conversation? Where is it located in the body of literature which describes communication? How inclusive is this conversation? In order to answer these questions, I refer to Warren (2006), Friere (1996), Gadamer (1975), Habermas (1979, 1985) and Bohm and Peat (1987).

Warren (2006, pp. 7-12) describes a number of attributes in relation to conversation. With reference to Goffman (1971), he describes conversation as an exchange that goes beyond greetings and embraces and moves towards topical talk which is “pre-eminently cognitive and informative so that it is more than a ritualised exchange”. Warren's second

characteristic is taken from Wilson (1987, 1989) as "equal distribution of speaker rights."

All participants have equal rights and responsibilities to maintain and service the conversation. Warren also references Crystal and Davy (1969) to describe a third characteristic of conversation as randomness or freedom of subject. Therefore, the *YMCA Movement Conversation*, in order to qualify as conversation, needs to exhibit a) a cognitive aspect, which it does in terms of the subject material; b) equal distribution of rights, which it appears to do because YMCA England encourages all YMCAs to participate in the conversation; and c) a freedom of expression within the subject material.

The YMCA conversation can be described from literature in many different ways. However, when consideration is given to defining *conversation*, it is immediately apparent that there is no widely accepted definition (Warren, 1996, p. 6). Johnstone describes conversation as a series of "turns" operating without the necessity of formal analysis, but which are difficult to predict and control (2002, p. 73). Biber refers to conversation as one element in discourse production where the speaker and addressee share the experience of co-production (1988, p. 147). Swales notes that that conversation is a "pre-genre" on which more specific types of interaction have "either broken away or evolved" (1990, pp. 58-60).

I therefore suggest that the YMCA Movement Conversation is a type of platform from which forms of conversation emanate. For example, Gadamer (1975, p. 180, and pp. 359-361) describes conversation as the process of two people understanding each other.

Therefore shared knowledge arises through interaction and process. For Habermas

(1979, p. 3, and pp. 26-27) and Friere (1970, p. 61) dialogue is a form of conversation that is dependent on a balance of power and equality. Bohm and Peat (1987, p. 247) also describe dialogue as a form of conversation in which participants exhibit an ability to hold many points of view in suspension, along with a primary interest in the creation of common meaning. This links with Gadamer's expectation that pre-judgements need to be critically appraised in order for shared understanding to emerge.

In my view, the *YMCA Movement Conversation* as a platform provides for conversation, dialogue and debate. The YMCA conversation is therefore a more sophisticated means of communication than *conversation* might suggest at a superficial level. In places, locations and events where one might expect a unity of shared views (e.g. UNIFY, Christian conferences and in individual YMCAs) there are differences of views about the Christian basis. However, to describe the communication as conversation requires the inclusion of those silent or very quiet voices that are not actively involved in the communication. The research suggests that confident, strong or loud voices failed to hear the quiet or silent voices and this happens where the Christian basis has both high meaning and where it has low meaning. However, the quiet or silent voices need to be acknowledged and actively heard because they, although more passive, are difficult to hear. They may appear less confident about their relationship with the Christian basis but they present important aspects on the meaning of it. I had to consider the possible reasons why individuals were silent or quiet in my research. The research showed that it was possible that the non-respondents were a large silent cohort. Furthermore, within the groups of participants some respondents were less vocal while there were occasional silent voices. I had made the invitation process as open and inclusive as

Page | 147

possible. I had briefed as clearly as I could and had made the point that as a senior manager, I was not conducting this research with covert intentions, but as a genuine attempt to assist the YMCA. Belk (2006, p. 166) considers the political and power relationships with reference to Foucault, who argues that: “the presentation of voice in the production of knowledge is a political act in that power and knowledge are mutually constituted”. Therefore, the extent to which freedom is given to participants to share their stories affects the power especially of the “marginalized and generally silent participants”.

What I did notice was that a number of participants who defined themselves as being of no faith or not of the Christian faith seemed to express relief at being given permission to share this fact in a confidential environment where they would not be identified outside of the research activities. Equally, self-defined Christians also expressed gratitude at being able to speak openly about their faith and its relationship with their work in the YMCA. Some of them had felt that they were not able to speak of their faith at work prior to participating in the research. In these instances, I hoped that I was facilitating those quieter voices present in the activity, although Bogdan & Biklen (1998, p. 204) suggest that: “while qualitative research provides readers with access to the world of people they would not otherwise know and to some extent allows these people’s stories to be told, the subject never actually tells his own story”. Very often the story is retold or mediated by the researcher. In my attempts to facilitate quieter and silent voices, I faced the very dilemma for which Mantzoukas (2004, p. 1002) provides a stark reminder: “research adhering to non-positivist paradigms, if it does not overtly include the researcher, violates in principle what is viewed as valid for these paradigms”.

He continues, in keeping with Krieger (1991, p. 5), noting that “we cannot but represent ourselves in the experiences of others”. Clandinin and Connelly describe stories “as the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell our experience (1994, p. 415). They also note that “a story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history [and that] people live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones” (1994, p. 415).

Therefore, it was imperative as researcher to identify how I could interact in the most faithful way possible with those voices that might be silent for any number of unknown reasons. In response, I decided to use a conceptual framework to: a) overtly demonstrate a counterpoint and differences between voices as far as was practical; and b) to exclude my own voice from the data collection.

During some of the research activities, I noticed that a small number of participants occasionally paused uncomfortably, showed some slight discomfort and sought reassurance from me, even if they were confident and open with other questions. I took these moments as possible markers for silence, where a person’s quieter, less confident voice might reside. Furthermore, in the facilitated groups, I designed a process to enable less confident, quiet or silent participants to share contributions with me that they, for whatever reason, might not feel able to share in the main facilitated sessions.

Each participant was given an anonymous workbook that they completed during the session and in these they recorded their thoughts prior to sharing anything with the group. They were encouraged to share any particular items directly with me through the workbooks if they felt that they could not speak in the group session or that they could not raise the particular issue.

These quieter voices and silences need to be acknowledged and heard because they have meaningful contributions to make to the YMCA's conversation. Therefore these quieter and silent voices are recognised "not in ways that are deemed absent as silent, but in ways that are meaningful as noiseless" (Mazzei and Jackson, 2012, p. 747).

Moments of hesitation or silence were obviously important and I marked them in my notes during the sessions. Thus, in agreement with Mazzei (2007, p. xii), silence in this research is not conceived of as: "a lack, an absence, or negation" but rather silence is part of the whole, the relevant speech act spoken beneath the surface" which is easily affected by the louder voices.

The research process created opportunities for voices in the YMCA to be identified and for them to address various aspects of the organisation's relationship with the Christian basis. Mazzei and Jackson (2012, pp. 755-756) and Lincoln and Guba (2005, p. 209) suggest that attempts to report a single truth, articulated by a single voice through verbatim presentation of words, cues, lapses and silences can be more damaging to qualitative research than the pluralised homogenous voice attempting to cover all aspects of a group of voices. Mazzei and Jackson (2012, p. 747) argue that "rather than

succumbing to the primacy of one voice in the qualitative research, we need to plug in

voices to produce something new, a process of continuous making and unmaking". The framework that I have devised, while it cannot fully represent all aspects of Mazzei and Jackson's thinking, attempts to locate a balance between the homogenised multi-vocal voice and a cacophony of lone voices attempting to outdo each other. A relatively wide range of voices were identified in the research. They exhibit varying degrees of strength and confidence and they represent a range of foci. They are not found in isolation, but are in communication with each other. The communication within the YMCA concerning its Christian basis has been described by leaders in the YMCA as a conversation, but the research suggests that what is described as a "Movement Conversation" concerning matters such as the Christian basis, brand and governance, was shown in the analysis to be a more complex form of interaction between various different groups of voices than the term infers. The research findings present a more complex situation where the communication is actually a continuum between dialogue and conversation.

In reflecting on the research data, I was able to discern a three part structure that provides coherence for the themes arising through *voices in communication*. First, the voices were identified in terms of *audibility* with loud, quiet and silent responses. Second, voices were identified in terms of their *affinity* with the Christian basis. They variously described relationships with the Christian basis as being of *confusion* or *clarity*, *compliance* or *challenging*, *Church focussed* or *focussed elsewhere*, *corporate* or *individual* and *Christian* or *not Christian*. Third, the voices were identified in terms of their *attitude* towards the Christian basis. Analysis of data from each of the research activities revealed a differing attitude towards the Christian basis. Having provided an

overview of a framework which I believe is capable of explaining the interactions of participatory voices in relation to the YMCA's Christian basis, in the next section, I provide a more detailed explanation for each of the three parts of the framework with reference to my chosen conceptual partners. Having defined my framework for voices in communication, I now address each of the three key themes namely: *audibility*, *affinity* and *attitude*, starting with audibility.



### **The Audibility of Voices in the YMCA**

I undertook to describe the relationship between the voices that I had encountered irrespective of their audibility. I read over my notes, analysis and the transcriptions again with the specific intention of identifying any differentiation between voices to: a) group the areas of strongest response and b) identify themes relating to silence or quieter voices. Where participants spoke with passion, conviction or assumed authority, I graded these as loud. Where participants spoke with uncertainty or trepidation, I graded these as quiet or very quiet. Where participants felt or indicated through their body language that they could not, or did not, wish to speak, I graded those responses as silence. The workbooks gave me an opportunity to attempt to identify the content of these quiet or silent contributions because participants wrote things down that they were silent about in the sessions.

To make sense of these, I utilised these nominal data to produce a value scale range including: Loud (3) Quiet (2) Very Quiet (1) and Silent (0). The resultant narrow range of scores does not permit anything more than a basic interpretative commentary on potential differences in audibility between groups. It is not, and was not, intended to be statistically valid. It serves as a low-level indicator of the possible relationships between different voices but cannot on its own indicate more than the possibility of differences.

Using the same themes from my pilot interviews and facilitated groups of Christian basis, spirituality and inclusivity, I scored each of the responses and then aggregated the scores to produce a value for trustees, senior managers, coordinator staff and operational staff with volunteers. Finally, I located those specific occasions where I had sensed that participants had demonstrated silence and placed those in themed boxes under the participant groups.

This method gives an indication that five board members appear to be confident about their awareness of the Christian basis as well as its implementation. Eight senior officers also appeared confident about the awareness of the Christian basis, but very slightly less confident about the implementation of it. One of these officers stated in the session: “I was not aware of details of the Christian basis and have never interpreted it in that way” [confident awareness] and also wrote in their workbook “the Christian basis is achieved in all that we do” [less confident about implementation]. In addition, two senior officers indicated (through silence) their lack of confidence about their awareness of the Christian basis. They said nothing in the discussion but following my invitation in the session briefing to share sensitive thoughts through the workbooks, one of these senior officers wrote: “good work can be done without awareness of the Christian basis or the need for people to become Christians”. The other senior officer wrote: “I know about the Christian basis, not as a Christian, but because I share values common to humans and to the Christian basis.” Two coordinating staff seemed less confident about their awareness and even less confident than that about the implementation of it. One stated in the session: “the problem with the Christian basis is it is either not known by us or is hidden”. Two coordinating staff were silent about both awareness and implementation

of the Christian basis with one writing: “This is not what I thought the YMCA did and I don’t know how we could do it”. Another wrote “this is really difficult to understand and I did not know that this is part of the YMCA. I was surprised that we have Christian statements in our YMCA”. Five operational staff and volunteers appeared relatively less confident about their awareness than they were about the implementation of it. One noted “I just thought the Christian basis is what the Board talks about and we get on with the work”. There were two silences about awareness and two about the implementation of it. One operational staff member, mostly silent in the session, wrote: “I don’t believe that the Christian basis is necessary ‘cause I don’t believe that there is a hell, but I do believe in caring for people”. However, the overall sample suggested more confidence about spirituality and inclusivity with more agreement between Board members, senior officers and coordinating staff about this than anything else. Operational staff and volunteers might be in agreement with them in terms of confidence about spirituality, but slightly less confident about inclusivity. There were two silences about awareness and implementation of the Christian basis.

This particular interpretative exercise suggests that those people in leadership and governance roles within the sample were more likely to be confident about the Christian basis than coordinating or operational staff and volunteers. While I detected no silences about spirituality and inclusivity, all the silences that I identified related to the Christian basis. Potential areas of agreement between participants were inclusivity and spirituality while potential areas of difference of opinion related to the Christian basis.

Having used this method to engage voices from the facilitated groups and field visits in terms of audibility, I decided to apply it retrospectively to the pilot study to identify any variations of interest between audibility in the study and the pilot study. Six board members in the pilot study were potentially most confident in their responses about the Christian basis, both in terms of understanding and implementation and in comparison with other voices. One board member said that “The Christian basis is about Christians in unity, working together” and “it’s presenting Jesus as a model for young people”. Another noted in their interview that “The Christian basis arises from personal faith and its application in the YMCA to help people”. One senior officer, one operational staff member and one volunteer appeared less confident about awareness of the Christian basis. An operational staff member said: “the Christian basis makes no sense to me”. Two coordinator staff were possibly more confident about this than senior officers, operational staff and volunteers. One noted “it’s about creating disciples”. One senior officer and two coordinator staff appeared to be quiet (less confident) about the implementation of the Christian basis. The senior officer stated: “I don’t know if the YMCA does anything as a result of the Christian basis.” One volunteer appeared to be very quiet about the implementation of the Christian basis and they reluctantly said that “I don’t think that we do this” [Christian basis]. Two senior officers and three coordinating staff seemed more confident about inclusivity, with one volunteer less so. The volunteer notes: “As a Christian I am not sure how we can work with all these other people with other beliefs”. One board member appeared silent about the application of spirituality, stating that “I don’t know how to answer the question about spirituality and the YMCA” and one senior officer appeared to demonstrate silence regarding awareness and application of spirituality noting that “I don’t feel that I can answer this”. They were

confident in answering other questions so this reluctance appeared as a possible silence. Two operational staff and one volunteer appeared to have demonstrated silence about awareness and implementation of the Christian basis. One operational staff member refused initially to answer the questions about the Christian basis, but eventually said: “it [Christian basis] makes no sense for the work we do”.

In both the pilot and main study, those in governance and leadership appeared more confident about the Christian basis and more willing to explain how they defined it. A possible variation was the difference in how operational staff and volunteers perceived their confidence with the awareness and implementation of the Christian basis. In the pilot study, this group appeared more confident about awareness and less confident about implementation. The opposite seemed true for the facilitated groups and field visits, where confidence was higher for implementation and lower for awareness.

Inclusivity was the one motivation to which most participants appeared to respond with confidence. The Christian basis and spirituality elements both elicited variations in *audibility* and therefore in confidence. My study in *audibility* suggests that the participants exhibited a range of responses in relation to the Christian basis as shown by their relative and variable levels of confidence in speaking about it. The study also suggests that leaders and governors (trustees) appear generally more likely to be confident about the Christian basis and that delivery staff appear less confident with it and its implementation. The *audibility* task supports the proposition that it is care for young people and inclusivity that are almost the universal motivations with which most participants felt confident. Therefore, in answer to the question of “*What does audibility*”

Page | 157

*contribute to an understanding of the meaning of the Christian basis?”*, I propose that audibility suggests that the Christian basis has less meaning, generates less confidence and is less universally accepted than care for young people and inclusivity. Having addressed audibility as one of the three key themes in my voices in communication framework, in the next section I address the themes identified for *affinity*.

### **Affinity with the Christian Basis**

In this section I describe the relationship between participants and the Christian basis in terms of their *affinity* with it. Within the task of exploring this relationship I not only describe the various groups of voices encountered in the research, but I also consider the differences between those confident voices which appeared in the research, which often appeared to be Christian voices, and those less confident voices, which sometimes appeared to emanate from positions of no or other faith.

In my analysis of the research data in reference to *affinity* with the Christian basis, I identified five voice groups from the participants represented by word pairs: Christian and non-Christian, Confusion and Clarity, Compliant and Challenging, Church and Societal/Secular plus Corporate and Individual. These describe the nature of the *affinity* that voices have with the Christian basis depending on: a) their origins and b) the specific interpretation of the Christian basis prevalent at the time of discussion. I propose that the different *affinities* fall within what Cameron et al. describe with reference to the Second Vatican Council as “seeking ways to establish continuity between apparently disparate voices within the Ecclesial community” (2010, p. 52). As previously suggested the YMCA is part of the Ecclesia, namely the “fellowship of Christian Believers” (Brunner, 1952, p. 10). Cameron et al. also suggest that theology is “faith seeking understanding” (2010, p. 51) and I propose that the YMCA’s voices in conversation are demonstrative of faith and faithfulness seeking understanding.

The challenge is to make sense of the differences that arise between motivations that are faith-based and those that are faithful. What I mean by this is that there are participants who would define their motivation as being rooted in their faith, which might be Christian or other. For example, one participant said: “as a Christian, I believe that I’m called to work in the YMCA so I fully support the Christian basis”. Then there are other participants who do not have a faith, but are motivated by something else and are passionate about remaining faithful to this other motivation. An obvious and repeated motivation in this group is care for young people. A participant stated: “I believe that we all share a common set of values, Christian or not and we all work for young people irrespective of what we believe”.

Furthermore, Cameron et al. (2010) propose their four *Voices Of Theology* (2010, pp.53-56) which are normative theology, formal theology, espoused theology and operant theology. Cameron et al. note that these four voices are descriptions of the living tradition of faithful Christian practices (2010, p. 51). I suggest that the *affinities* describe the relationship that participants have with the YMCA’s *operant* theology in the sense that the participants describe how they think and feel about the motivations for what they do in the YMCA, faithfully seeking understanding.

With reference to the model provided by Cameron et al., my research activities provided opportunities for participants to discuss aspects of the YMCA’s *operant* theology in relation to the YMCA’s *espoused* theology. The resultant *affinities* suggest that there are differences between what the YMCA espouses as its theological position as located in its overtly Christian registered charitable objects, and what motivates participants to work

Page | 160



in the YMCA. Not all participants work in the YMCA because of the Christian basis. This suggests that the YMCA's *espoused* theology does not cover the range of motivations inherent within and without the YMCA's *operant* theology.

In attempting to better understand the relationship between the affinities emanating from confident voices and those of the less confident voices I found Terrien's theology of presence to be helpful (2000). He describes the elusive presence of God in terms of how those who are confident and those who are not confident perceive it. Through this approach Terrien provides a means of describing the relationship between various affinities demonstrated by YMCA voices identified in my research including: a) those which in their Christian confidence wish to exert a particular formula to cause God to inhabit the YMCA; b) those voices that are less confident which may be Christian or of other faith that are and about how God relates to the YMCA; and c) those voices for whom the very idea of God is irrelevant.

I suggest that those voices that in their Christian confidence wish to exert a particular formula to cause God to inhabit the YMCA presume to have an exclusivist and powerful ability to call on or cause God's presence in the YMCA. Conversely, those voices for whom God's relationship with the YMCA is nonexistent might consider that there is nothing that they can do to invoke the presence of God in the YMCA. In response to both groups of voices Terrien's theology suggests that they are misguided because the presence of God is not determined by the powers, knowledge or abilities that people have, but rather that the presence is elusive and impossible to predict. Terrien's theology does however suggest that presence, while not guaranteed, seems to be

mysteriously related to selfless cooperation in service to others. Terrien's theology, therefore, is a helpful means of mitigating those power relationships in the YMCA which seek to claim or disclaim the YMCA's contemporary relationship with God's purposes.

There are voices that suggest an affinity with a very specific, overt and dominant focus on a proselytising interpretation of the Christian basis. Statements like: "I have always been committed to the Christian core of the YMCA from day one"; "This [overtly Christian registered charitable Object One] is the core basis of our work"; "this [overtly Christian registered charitable Object One] means that the YMCA is here for Christians – those who regard Jesus Christ as their God" and "This is our heritage, always has been and should continue so that we continue to be inspired and directed by God". For these voices, the enactment of the Christian basis is the precursor to the presence of God in the YMCA.

There are other voices whose affinities suggest that the Christian basis is a distant historical construction or that God's presence has departed from the YMCA. For example, "the YMCA has been a Christian organisation, but it isn't any more" and "the written [Christian basis] statements used to be important, but now it's the practical work we do that is really important".

These two groups of affinities lie at opposite ends of a continuum with a range of views in-between. Terrien articulates an argument based on a pre-Christian, Old Testament conception that the ever present, but elusive God of the Old Testament is symbolic of the relationship that God has with contemporary society. I suggest that Terrien's

description can extend to the YMCA in a limited but useful way. Terrien's description of the elusive God (2000, p. 476) mediates the relationship between those voices that describe God as being absent from the contemporary YMCA and those voices that believe that they can invoke the presence of God through their definitions of Christian-based activities that are designed to be "attractive" to God.

Terrien suggests that the presence in this world is elusive but nevertheless is mediated by the divine through people and Scripture. He describes how the Israelite experience of the presence of God was not determined by the earthly positions of role, authority, nor by cultic and ritualistic activities, but rather through the mysterious workings of God in relation to those who God chose to approach.

Terrien proposes that both the theological symbols of "*glory*" and "*name*" (2000, p. xxvii) need to be in communication in the realisation of the presence of God in a particular situation or place. *Glory* in this context infers a visual expression of presence and *name* infers a response to an audible call to activism. In simpler terms I suggest that Terrien's "*glory*" refers metaphorically to all that those cultural constructions upheld in the YMCA that are seen as central to the YMCA's unique expression of the Christian basis. Examples might include the overtly Christian registered charitable objects, the means of performance of devotions at Board meetings, prayer meetings, worship services held in the YMCA. Terrien's "*name*" refers metaphorically to the work of the YMCA, namely those things that the YMCA actually does for young people. Examples might include the non overtly Christian registered charitable objects, the provision of housing, care and recreation.

I refer back to Cameron et al. here because Terrien's "*glory*" mirrors the YMCA's espoused theology and "name" the YMCA's operant theology. Terrien notes that when the visual expression of worship and the call to activism are separated, "the former tends to foment an ethnic, esoteric, sectarian, and even racial exclusivism which promotes a static religion and a closed morality. The latter without the former tends to degenerate into a secular activism and an amorphous humanism" (2000, p. xxvii). I suggest that this duality is demonstrated by the differences between a) the dogmatic confident Christian affinity that seeks to advocate its power to invoke the presence of God in the YMCA; and b) the less confident affinities, Christian and of other or no faith, which are much less sure about the relationship between God and the YMCA. In other words, if someone claims that the presence of God in the YMCA is imperative and that the only way to ensure that God's presence is witnessed in the YMCA is to perform the overtly Christian registered charitable objects then they are likely to initiate a exclusive sectarian response adhered to only by those with the same views as themselves. Furthermore, by focussing only on the provision of services like any other non-faith-based organisation, Terrien's theology suggests that such an approach could result in secular social action delivered by many charities but that such an approach might not honour the history of the YMCA.

I suggest that once account is taken of the limitations of the significant cultural differences between ancient Hebraic society and Western culture, then Terrien's model becomes a symbolic description of the participant's range of affinities with the Christian basis. The *glory* or visual expression of the Christian basis in the YMCA is located in those *affinities* with a very specific, overt and dominant focus on a proselytising interpretation

of it. For these voices, the enactment of the Christian basis is the precursor to the presence of God in the YMCA. In contrast, the *name* or audible call to activism is largely symbolic of those who just get on with doing the work of the YMCA. The challenge from Terrien is not to let these two parts of the whole become separated. I suggest that there is a risk of this happening in the YMCA's Movement Conversation, wherein those who favour the overt expression of the Christian basis and those who have dismissed it in favour of activism do very much need to be in conversation. Terrien illustrates this point with reference to 1 Samuel 10:5 where a band of prophets roaming the countryside in Israel is symbolic of the activist group (2000, p. 228). They were constituted from a range of culturally diverse people including: "cultic officials, secularly employed laymen, shepherds, and farmers – who obeyed a prophetic vocation" exercising their operant theology. Terrien alludes to the distaste that some priests and political leaders would have experienced towards some of these prophets. Even though they were engaged with the presence of God, they were doing so in ways that dishonoured the espoused theology of the priests and political leaders.

In the research activities, I realised that the participant YMCA voices may too have a role to play in declaring the presence of God, but they may do so in ways that are unattractive to some leaders and some of those in authority. In similar ways to Terrien's model, the YMCA voices in my research include a wide range of people, for example, leaders, trustees, operational staff, youth workers, church leaders, cleaners, Christians, atheists and accountants. All these people have different backgrounds and yet they work in the YMCA. Like the band of prophets, they might seem an unlikely means of engagement with the elusive presence of God, but in keeping with Terrien's model,

Page | 165

perhaps it is through the very strange, unorthodox joining of these people that God sometimes chooses to occasionally exhibit presence.

The YMCA is described on the YMCA England website as an: “inclusive Christian Movement, transforming communities so that all young people truly belong, contribute and thrive” (YMCA England, 2013a). Furthermore, on the same site the YMCA is described as a: “non-denominational, evangelical Christian movement”, and “today it works with young men and women regardless of race, religion or culture”. This broad “congregation” is focussed on the young but has a significant intergenerational profile in terms of trustees, staff and volunteers. This brings a wide range of people into the YMCA with varying ages, ethnicity, religions, cultures and beliefs.

The affinity that voices had in the research activities with the Christian basis depended on their interpretation of it and how closely they thought the YMCA movement might align with the registered charitable object statements of the YMCA. The participants mostly defined the relevance of the Christian basis in a range between being not relevant to important, whereas care for young people and inclusion were defined almost universally as the most important motivations in the work of the YMCA. A closer reading of the research data revealed that the majority of participants had a lower affinity with the Christian basis if it was aligned to the overtly Christian charitable objects of the YMCA, the more the Christian basis was aligned with the objects, the less affinity the participants had with it. Participants were mostly accepting of the Christian basis if it was defined in general and historical terms without any imperative to proselytise and without reference to any specifically Christian language. Participants appeared to have

Page | 166

affinity with the Christian basis providing that it aligned with positive attributes that are common to humanity, such as care and love.

In this next sub-section, which is part of the section addressing *affinity* within my *voices in communication framework*, I define the various affinities identified in my research activities.

### **Christian and Other or Non-Faith Affinity**

These particular voices are located within three main groups: a) Christians with an affinity towards maintaining the traditional historical position; b) people of other or no faith with an affinity towards removal of the Christian basis and c) a mixed group of Christians and people of no or other faith with an affinity towards reinterpretation of the Christian basis. A minority of participants who defined themselves as Christian also described the YMCA's Christian basis in terms of strict compliance with the overtly Christian registered charitable objects. They supported proselytising and Christian spiritual education as critical to the success of the YMCA and the reason why the YMCA was "so successful in the past" (statement from one facilitated group). However, a majority of self-defined Christian participants were comfortable with an interpretative approach to the overtly Christian registered charitable objects. Furthermore, a significant proportion of those who considered themselves not to be Christians were in accord in defining the practical outworking of the Christian basis as care and love for young people. A minority of participants of other or no faith felt that the Christian basis had served a purpose early in the YMCA's history, but that it was no longer relevant. In summary, there were Christian voices with affinity for the historical Christian basis. There were also voices of other or no faith with affinity towards removal of the Christian basis. A third mixed group of Christian, other and no faith participants favoured an affinity for reinterpretation.



Three groups of voices demonstrated different affinities in relation to the Christian basis and they are located at the extremities of the affinity continuum described on page 159ff. The non-faith groups also contain more silent voices than some of the other affinities and they represent the least communicative groups in terms of drawing the YMCA's espoused and operant theologies together in conversation. One participant noted: "Without the Christian basis the YMCA would not be what is currently is and was. However, we need to acknowledge and incorporate the absolutely vital contributions made more and more by those without a Christian faith," and "the Christian basis needs to be updated. It's not moving away from the Christian basis, but it is putting them into a new real context".

### **Confusion and Clarity Affinity**

One of the self-evident by-products of the federated YMCA movement with its decentralised authority and dispersed power, is an extended organisational structure and convoluted decision-making processes. In principle federated structures ought to demonstrate cooperation and inclusivity. However, they also run the heightened risk of generating confusion through their decision-making processes and complex power structures. Within the YMCA's federation, local decision-making allows for many different interpretations of various issues and subjects, all of which are legitimate even when at odds. The facilitated groups in particular were formed out of this context. The main area of shared clarity in these sessions was quality assurance. It was for training and development in the YMCA's INSYNC quality assurance system that these peer assessors joined together. INSYNC is the English YMCA's own quality assurance system, endorsed by the Charity Commission and the system relies on trained peer assessors from local member YMCAs to conduct assessments in other local member YMCAs against a set of standards. Therefore, in the research sessions each participant brought with them their own local YMCA's culture and approach to subjects including the Christian basis.

The research suggests that where participants were in agreement, they were also clear about the meaning of the subject. For example, participants were almost in complete agreement about inclusivity, a subject about which participants shared a clear understanding with little detectable confusion. A participant noted how the participants in conversation in one session had agreed on the importance of inclusivity to the YMCA. Conversely, interactions with the Christian basis did not generate such levels of

agreement and there was confusion in the discussions about it both as a concept and in its enactment. For example “I didn’t know that the YMCA had these sorts of statements in its constitution [overtly Christian registered charitable objects], but they are not why I am part of the YMCA” versus “I joined the YMCA because of the Christian basis and for me it is important to share Jesus with young people”. That I had been asked in the first instance to work with them on their understanding of the Christian basis, was an attempt to reduce their confusion. They were hoping for a single agreed perspective on the Christian basis but instead soon realised through the session that individual perspectives were often at odds with each other resulting in a confusing mix of perceptions. The benefit of these facilitated groups was that this confusion, which exists inherently in the structure, but is often shrouded or kept in the background, was brought into the open and talked about. One participant emphasised how beneficial the session had been as a platform on which to highlight these confusing differences, noting that “we need more sessions like this to help us reach agreement on what to do about the Christian basis”.

My voice is located, in part, in this theme. Earlier (see page 59ff) I described my background and starting position in this research journey. I had assumed that the YMCA as a Christian-based organisation would seek to align itself with a Christian emphasis that might be broadly recognisable as derived from various church models mixed with the YMCA’s own unique history as part of the Ecclesia. From that position of certainty, I entered the research only to be challenged by the process and results of the research. I realised retrospectively that it was at this point I had finally entered the *real* YMCA where authority is decentralised into local organisations which interpret a set of shared

Page | 171

governance objects locally and yet attempt to associate nationally and internationally.

Where association does happen it is in an imperfect and incomplete way.

The Christian basis that I now understand is not the one with which I began this research journey. I now know that it is far more confusing, elusive, evading and surprising than the formal tenets of the Christian basis statements located in the overtly Christian registered charitable objects. In parallel with how Terrien (2000, p. 476) describes the presence as elusive, I suggest that the Christian basis has the same nature. Terrien suggests (2000, p. 476) that “in biblical faith, human beings discern that presence is elusive and fragile, even and especially when human beings seek to prolong it in the form of *cultus*”. I suggest that where attempts are made to “capture” the Christian basis or to engineer it to conform with a particular model or framework, then at those moments the Christian basis slips out of grasp. In attempting to define the parameters in which the Christian basis is to be contained, this creates the very *cultus* that destroys our assumption of access to presence. The desire of participants to form and shape a framework is indicative of the natural human tendency towards order, structure and control.

Terrien’s model demonstrates this in the context of ancient Israel’s attempts at manufacturing a structure and understanding within the ritualistic environment of the temple as a means to assure and ensure the ongoing maintenance of the presence of God during the times when it appeared that God was not present. As Terrien (2000, p. 476) notes, “when presence is ‘guaranteed’ to human senses or reason, it is no longer real presence”. In other words, the more the participants attempted to define and

package the Christian basis so that they could go to a YMCA to measure its effectiveness alongside other measurable items, the more confusing it became and the less present it seemed. In attempting to tie the Christian basis down to objects within a cultic structure, and in attempting to structure the Christian basis through politically correct, focussed, enforced, inclusive practices, the participants were inadvertently destroying its presence.

The confused groups of voices with these affinities represent some of the most conversational participants from the sample. These groups represent individual voices committed to the pursuance of links between the operant and espoused theologies where individual voices committed to the YMCA's purposes sought to engage the YMCA and other people in the organisation in conversation about the way forward. Those voices of clarity tended to locate around inclusivity, but they also demonstrated a willingness to converse about how the Christian basis is maintained within an inclusive environment.

Groups of voices of clarity in inclusivity and of confusion demonstrate conversation in action with a commitment to maintaining and developing the YMCA's operant and espoused theologies with the intention of maintaining the YMCA's relevance. Terrien gives a succinct description of those groups of voices not afraid of entering into conversation for the purposes of finding shared, inclusive understandings. He quotes Euripides, who states that "the god comes when those in love recognise one another" and "it is when presence escapes man's grasp that it surges, survives, or returns" and "when human beings meet in social responsibility that presence, once vanished, is

heard” (2000, p. 476 and p. 483). Within a commitment to ongoing conversation, there is the potential for the YMCA to continue to maintain its relevance in delivering socially responsible work while maintaining and including disparate voices within the security of the Christian basis.

### **Compliant and Challenging Affinity**

In the process of inviting local YMCAs to participate in the research, I became aware of those voices with a compliant or challenging affinity with the Christian basis. The voice with an affinity towards challenge was not overt, but made itself known through a small number of responses. The significant majority of local YMCAs that I invited to participate in this research did not reply, despite the invitation going out in different forms on three occasions. Nevertheless, I did receive a very small number of responses that declined my invitation with reasons that included a suggestion that the Christian basis was not of significance and that the distinctive nature of the local work was most important. It is not possible from the research to identify the exact reasons for the non-response of the majority of YMCAs that I contacted. They were neither challenging nor compliant in an overt manner.

However, when I undertook a brief survey of all YMCAs in England in relation to their registrations with the Charities Commission as recorded on the Charities Commission's website, I noticed there was often a gap between the formal Christian-based registration and what the individual YMCA had listed on its own website about its work locally.

Again, this is not evidence of a formal challenge to the Christian basis, but rather it is suggestive of a progressive, subversive challenge. In the facilitated groups there were no overt statements of challenge voiced against the Christian basis during the sessions, but the silent, quiet and less confident voices presented written challenges to the validity of the Christian basis in the workbooks that were returned. This suggests that not many participants felt able to openly challenge the Christian basis; instead they made that position known to me via the silent routes built into the facilitated process. For example,

one participant who did not say anything controversial in the session wrote in the workbook that - “the YMCA provides services, but should not be doing so from a Christian perspective”.

The affinity towards challenge was more noticeable in the questions raised about the nature of the Christian basis. Some participants strongly opposed any overtly Christian wording and references to proselytising. The challenging voice in this context was regarding the nature of the Christian basis and an unwillingness to accept a Christian basis with any overt Christian emphases in it. A participant wrote: “the Christian basis needs to be inclusive of all faiths and none. Christians talking openly about Jesus, for example, may cause difficulties for people of other faiths.”

The compliant voice was easier to identify in that a small minority of participants in the facilitated groups together with most of the representatives from the field visits and were in favour of compliance with the Christian basis. These participants felt that the overtly Christian registered charitable objects were a) representative of what they already do and b) representative of what the YMCA ought to be doing. None of these participants were of the view that the whole YMCA is currently upholding the overtly Christian registered charitable objects.

Terrien (2000, p. 350-380) addresses *challenge* in the context of presence with reference to Job’s relationship with God. In Job’s suffering he demands that God honours his right to be vindicated because (p. 369) he, like the rest of the Israelites had, “tragically fooled themselves into assuming that they had acquired rights upon the Almighty”. In the same

Page | 176



way in the facilitated sessions, some of those voices with a compliant affinity towards the Christian basis attempted to assert a right. Their justification emanated from their perception that the Christian basis they were upholding was in accordance with the overtly Christian registered charitable objects. The compliant voices often demonstrated an expectation that God was on their side and that the enactment of the overt Christian basis was their right and duty.

The compliant and challenging groups of voices may be furthest away from being able to engage in the Movement Conversation and yet both sets of voices have meaningful contributions which, with encouragement, they might make. The challenging voices may be indicative of subversive non-compliance, which is risky in terms of the associative nature of the YMCA model. The low response rate, coupled with the results of the website survey, suggest dissociative behaviour as a possible issue in the sample and while there will be other reasons for dissociative behaviour in local member YMCAs, one reason might be disengagement from the Movement Conversation and the Christian basis. This is indicative of a wide gap between operant and espoused theology where there may be no local operant theology at work or under discussion in local YMCAs with this type of affinity.

Two overt examples of this challenging, dis-associative affinity were identified within the research sample. In both examples, services were being delivered but only in the context of deliberate isolation from other YMCAs and separately from engagement in the YMCA movement. In the two local YMCAs I could not identify a recognisable link between the local YMCA and the wider YMCA movement's associative, espoused theology. The

leaders in both these local YMCAs were of the view that the Christian basis and other local YMCAs were not relevant to their local work and therefore they placed little value on the associative nature of the YMCA movement.

This type of informal disassociation is damaging to the YMCA movement because a) it is subversive; b) it might become deeply embedded in the local member YMCA and c) it may be difficult to address once it becomes normative in the culture of the local member YMCA. By way of a simple exercise the effects of this affinity can easily be demonstrated. Consider a theoretical informally disassociated local YMCA that has, by definition, set aside the letters “A” and “C” in “YMCA”, leaving the “Y” and “M”.

Accepting that the “M” in YMCA is inaccurate as a service descriptor because services are delivered to all young people, that leaves the letter “Y”, a descriptor of any organisation working with young people, but not one representative of an associative local YMCA.

## **Church and Societal Affinity**

In both the field visits and facilitated groups, I identified voices with an affinity towards a Church led interpretation of the Christian basis and voices that demonstrated an affinity towards a societal interpretation of it. The voice focussed on church affinity expected the local YMCA to “leave that sort of thing to the churches”, a comment from one participant, because the YMCA ought to focus on other needs. The net result of such an approach would be the separation of Christian activities in support of the enactment of the Christian basis and their placement in willing local churches. This is assuming that these local churches are competent in working with young people who often exhibit high dependency and challenging needs. The YMCA’s role in this scenario would simply be as a referral organisation as far as faith-based needs were concerned.

The voice with an affinity towards a societal relationship with the Christian basis suggested that the local YMCA has a role in society in enacting the Christian basis with young people in partnership with local churches. There were powerful examples in the field visits of effective partnerships between churches and local YMCAs. The success of these was reliant on the balance of power and a common agenda with a shared understanding of the needs of the client group. In one YMCA, the clients lived within the local organisation but volunteered and worked at the local church. The YMCA leadership and the church leadership had agreed on a common set of actions aimed at meeting a wide range of needs in the client group. The YMCA made sure that its behaviour policies were realistic and that the church was aware of the standards and procedures for recourse. The church had consulted with its congregation and agreed to become active in the community in providing meaningful opportunities for personal development, work

experience and social skills. The church had agreed a policy of not reacting to inappropriate language and behaviour within reason and to maintaining a commitment to the strategic goal of “saving the whole person” through “love, care and action”, a comment from one of the church leaders. In this example, the church and YMCA were relatively evenly matched in terms of power and local influence. Participant leaders cited this as a key balancing factor.

There were also examples of a breakdown of the relationship between local YMCAs and local churches. In another field visit, a YMCA and local churches had suffered a complete and long-term relational breakdown. The participating leader was of the view that the YMCA had inadvertently caused offence by delivering Christian-based activities prior to which the church had assumed was within their exclusive domain. The YMCA leader had noted that the YMCA had approached the church and offered to work in partnership, but that the church refused. The church apparently gave the reason that it was committed locally, but the YMCA leader was of the view that “the local church is too insular and doesn’t like ‘dealing’ with the types of young people that we work with”. The CEO continued “the [local] church is so insecure that unless it controls the activity it doesn’t want anything to do with it”. The YMCA had successfully secured funding to a level that the church could not achieve and the breakdown was complete. My understanding of this situation was that the root of the issue was a power imbalance and an incompatibility in purpose. The YMCA, in this instance, was better resourced and had more expertise than the church in terms of youth work and funding. The YMCA saw its purpose of enacting the Christian basis externally through social action. Perhaps the church was of the view that it had sole ownership of spiritual authority and that the

Page | 180

YMCA was usurping its position? Terrien refers to the pluralism of the church made homogenous through the “Eucharistic advent of presence” (2000, p. 466). He adds on the same page that “subsequent history, however, shows that that Christendom has too often reversed this sequence”. While it is clear as stated earlier that the YMCA is not defined as a church, it can be described as part of the Ecclesia. In a workshop in the 2012 YMCA UNIFY Conference, the presenter noted that “it is the YMCA’s mission to, in fellowship, proclaim the name of Jesus Christ and what he can do in everyone's life.” He based this statement on the work undertaken by Brunner (1952, p. 9) with reference to Calvin, noting that the visible Church is *externum subsidium fidei*: “an external means of salvation” whereas the Ecclesia is that group of believers who are the invisible Church. Brunner (p. 10) argues that the Ecclesia is the “fellowship of Christian Believers.” It is therefore possible in my view that it is imperative for the YMCA, and other Christian-based organisations within the Ecclesia to associate their efforts in partnership with local churches to give practical expressions to the idea of Ecclesia and to enact a homogenous Eucharist as an expression of Christ’s body in society.

In the voices with an affinity towards Church and society, other interesting relationships with the *Four Voices of Theology* from Cameron et al. are shown. In order to explain these, it is worth reflecting briefly on the ecumenical nature of the YMCA. Often noted as a strength, the ecumenical nature of the YMCA can be traced back to the origins of the movement as an intentional, deliberate part of the design.

The original founders came from a number of denominations. On this basis it is difficult to explain how the YMCA could uphold a *normative* theology (Cameron et al., 2010, p. 54) from any single denomination without setting aside its ecumenical roots. It is equally difficult to explain how a YMCA might hold firm to a *normative* theology that is anything other than ecumenical. So where a participant voice has suggested that *a church* or *the Church* ought to take care of spiritual needs they might mean: a) that *any part of the Church* could take care of spiritual needs, thereby partially upholding the ecumenical position; or b) that a specific *local church* ought to take care of spiritual needs and thereby possibly not upholding the ecumenical tradition; or c) the statement was made in ignorance of the YMCA's ecumenical nature. There are other permutations in this affinity, but the desire to give the work of spiritual education over to the churches goes against the registered charitable objects of the YMCA.

Nevertheless, the charitable objects do encourage a partnership relationship with churches and there are examples of where this works very well in meeting spiritual needs. In one of the field visits I was informed that the local member YMCA has employed a trained minister in a "fresh expressions" role as a senior staff member. This person was tasked with building relationships with the local churches as well as helping the YMCA to build its strategic planning around the Christian basis. In another field visit, the CEO explained that the "YMCA is party to the ongoing renewal of lives and the holistic conversion of people in the context of their whole lives. This is an ongoing struggle between faith and the expression of commitment to discipleship rather than singular conversations about conversion." This YMCA also employed a Christian spirituality worker who explained to me that "the desire is to allow the Christian basis to

Page | 182

impact people in the YMCA in open, caring, honest and non-threatening ways so that they live their lives through the values common to Christianity”. The Church and societal affinities provide opportunities for voices in communication within the YMCA as well as between the YMCA and society. This is not surprising given the origins of the YMCA as a movement serving society in partnership with churches.

### **Corporate and Individual Affinity**

In the historical survey of the YMCA, I recognised significant differences between the time in which the YMCA was created and the contemporary environment. In the 1840s and the last decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the YMCA could lay claim to a corporate approach to the Christian basis. It was very tightly bound into all of the work of local associations and was the key motivation for people choosing to become involved in running the YMCA. This singularity emanated directly from George Williams and the other founders. George Williams epitomised the Victorian, Christian philanthropist whose faith was worked out in practical service. Williams, as Hodder-Williams notes (1906, p. 22), “was not called by the earthquake, fire or great and strong wind. He was the child of the still quiet voice” and Hodder-Williams (1906, p. 26) continues: “in 1837, as a sixteen year old he [George Williams] was seeking Christ, and was placing himself in the way of finding Him”. Shedd (1955, p. 21) recorded an 1847 entry in the diary of George Williams: “I pray Thee to give me from this hour, a double portion of Thy Spirit that I may labour and work in this thy cause”. For George Williams, God’s voice was in the quiet contemplation of God’s purposes for his life. However, he went out of his way to seek God’s presence. At this point in the YMCA’s history, it would have been difficult to separate the corporate voice from the individual voice in their affinity towards the Christian basis.



In the facilitated groups, I detected voices deferring responsibility for the Christian basis to other individuals that they labelled as “them” and “they”. Further interaction identified these to be those with governance and leadership responsibility within the YMCA. During one activity in a session involving a discussion about responsibility for the Christian basis, a participant said: “The Christian basis is what they [trustees] take care of to ensure that it is done”. From this I understood that some of those participants who identified themselves as not Christian and those of other or no faith but who acknowledged the importance of the Christian basis, only felt comfortable with a corporate responsibility for the Christian basis. Conversely, those participants who self-defined as Christian were mostly comfortable with taking a personal responsibility for the Christian basis or for acting in ways that demonstrated the Christian emphasis.

Terrien’s (2000, p. 476) assertion that presence is heard when people meet in social responsibility is relevant in building an understanding of the corporate and individual affinity with the Christian basis. It is within the interactive, socially responsible environment of the YMCA that one encounters a range of voices whose interactions with each other, the YMCA and God define the YMCA’s affinity with its Christian basis. Terrien models a range of voices within Scripture as a “band of poetic prophets” (2000, p. 228) where each member of the prophetic band performs a specific essential function and together they respond to the elusive presence of God. The enactment of the Christian basis is affected in the same way. There is a corporate responsibility that arises out of the associative nature of the YMCA. This is a responsibility shared by those who are, as part of their appointment, knowledgeable of and committed to the Christian faith. In

addition, each of the individuals involved in the work of the YMCA is required to

undertake their specific roles with the understanding that they are contributing to the enactment of the Christian basis.

It was obvious from the pilot study and the facilitated groups that most of the participants who were not required to participate in achieving corporate responsibility for the Christian basis, and those individuals who undertook specific roles, were not confident in knowing how and what they were contributing to the Christian basis. One participant responded to questions about responsibility for and actions arising from the Christian basis saying “the board does this”. Another participant noted that the Christian basis was “for the Christian leaders to do”.

It was not possible to discern a shared corporate understanding of the meaning of the Christian basis. This is not altogether surprising given the ecumenical, federated structure of the YMCA. Nevertheless, there are examples of franchise models that express a uniform brand. For example, a franchise such as a major international burger chain has been able to ensure uniformity of mission, service and brand. It is obvious that there is a difference between selling standardised burgers and delivering bespoke services for “at risk” clients. However, that should only account for the differences in local delivery and it does not account for a lack of uniform branding, a deficit of shared understanding of the espoused statements, strategies and policies, including espoused theology in the YMCA.

The data acquired from participant YMCAs suggests that more could be done to assist YMCA people to understand how the individual's efforts contribute to the enactment of the Christian basis. With reference to Cameron et al. the differences between corporate and individual affinities point towards a break in conversations locally in YMCAs about the relationship between the operant and espoused theologies of the YMCA.

So far, I have addressed audibility and affinity in my voices in communication framework. In the next sub-section, I complete the process by describing the third element which is *attitude*. In order to develop the context of this section, I complete a number of brief explanatory tasks at the beginning, namely a) identify my reasons for choosing Berryman as a conceptual partner for this section; b) identify the link between Berryman's model; and c) define the metaphors that I borrow from Berryman to make sense of the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis.

## **Attitudes Towards the Christian Basis**

The third part of my framework concerns *attitudes* towards the Christian basis. The attitudes that I identified in the research concur broadly with those identified by Berryman (2009). His approach was an exercise looking at the status and meaning of children in the history of Christian theology and the work of theologians. In engaging Berryman's model, I have to address the challenge of different contexts between his research environment and that of the YMCA. My research concerns an organisation and its Christian basis, whereas Berryman's concepts relate to the relationship that theologians and churches have with children. I address this issue by suggesting that there are strong similarities between the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis and Berryman's description of the relationship that theologians and churches have with children.

The importance of Berryman's approach for my research lies in his attempt to help churches to establish theologically driven understandings that include children in church life as meaningful contributors and participants. In the same way that Berryman describes the theologian's responses to children, I describe the responses that the YMCA's research participants have demonstrated towards the Christian basis.

Berryman's model is helpful in two specific ways. First, it provides metaphors which I use as a means of interpreting relationships by structuring and presenting themes. Second, it also offers a means of addressing the question of whether or not enactment of the YMCA's Christian basis is in effect the *de facto* doctrine of the YMCA. In the next sections, I address each of these elements in turn.

### **Cathedrals and YMCA Buildings as Interpretative Metaphors**

Despite covering very different research subjects, there are conceptual similarities that carry through from Berryman's model into my research. Two of his modelling concepts provide very helpful metaphorical tools for interpreting the relationships in my research. First, he provides the metaphor of a building in the form of a cathedral (2009, p. 200) to create a powerful image for representing relationships between theologians and children. With adjustments, I use the same category of metaphor to describe the voices in the YMCA. I begin this next section by defining my use of the building metaphor before using it to describe each of the attitudinal voices identified in my research. Second, he utilises attachment theory (2009, pp. 200-201) to make sense of historical themes. At the end of this section, I utilise Berryman's explanation of attachment theory to conclude my explanation of the elusive nature of the Christian basis.

In defining the *de facto* doctrine of children, Berryman (2009, pp. 200-201) describes the process that he used in building his model as the gathering of vignettes that describe a *de facto* doctrine of children as a "hundred gated cathedral", where each theologian that he has surveyed is a gateway in the cathedral in the search for God. He then explores the meanings of the historical survey and these result in the four themes of ambivalence, ambiguity, indifference and grace. Berryman's cathedral with a hundred gateways as openings in the search for God provides a powerful metaphor in my research. While the cathedral is well suited for use as a description of Berryman's reflections on 2,000 years of theology in a Church context, a more appropriate image for the YMCA is a building that is representative of interactions between the YMCA's clients, staff and volunteers.

There is a wide variety of different YMCA buildings and models in England so I have chosen a symbolic composite building called YMCA Life as a suitable metaphor for hosting the voices in the YMCA. They live in this building. The various services provided in the building are the gateways to presence. I suggest that the attitudes of the various voices, namely ambivalence, ambiguity, indifference and grace interact with the Christian basis resulting in the opening or closing of doors in seeking the presence of God. Nevertheless, these doors are no barrier to the presence's power to evade all human constructions, material or otherwise. The challenge for YMCA Life is whether or not it keeps its service doors open to encourage clients to seek the presence of God. In keeping with its elusive, mysterious nature, presence may or may not be visible to voices in the YMCA Life, depending on their attitudes towards the Christian basis and its relevance.

While not every YMCA operates a facility that has the following service components, most YMCAs deliver at least some of them. In YMCA Life each of these services has their own room and gateway to seeking the presence. These services include the following: providing a safe place for clients to live, sleep and rest; access to healthy and nourishing meals; participation in learning and development; participation in spiritual development; improving health and fitness; addressing mental health needs; and learning how to engage with and contribute to society. In addition, YMCA Life has an administrative back office, a cleaning and repairs store and a laundry, all of which are essential to facilitating the front of house services.

My hundred-roomed YMCA Life building provides ample accommodation for the services that are delivered by the voices that have emerged from my research. Each voice has something legitimate to say to the other voices and this communication is facilitated in the building where both conversation and dialogue are enabled in an environment of mutual respect and care, which results in meaningful communication with the Christian basis. Therefore, in the same way that Berryman's cathedral is the *de facto* doctrine of children (2009, p. 200), YMCA Life becomes the *de facto* expression of the English YMCA's doctrine of the YMCA Christian basis.

In this context, *de facto* is taken to mean what is actually happening at this time whether authorised or not, and doctrine is taken to be the beliefs held about the Christian basis. Doctrine in this context follows Berryman's reference to Lindbeck's defined distinction between formal and informal doctrine (Berryman 2009, p. 225). Following Lindbeck, I suggest that the YMCA's doctrine has both a formal and an informal part (Lindbeck 1984, pp. 78-88). The formal part corresponds with an *espoused* theological position and the informal part with an *operant* theology. (Cameron et al. 2010, p. 54). The formal espoused doctrine of the YMCA may be seen in action when training is delivered on the Christian basis such as the "Why we are One" induction programme.

This type of training is heavily reliant on the YMCA's history and origins, which are used to justify the ongoing Christian focus of the YMCA's work. In the YMCA Life building this formal doctrine is found in the back office on a shelf in the form of an induction training programme and an annotated copy of the Paris Basis statement. Most of the voices in YMCA Life are not allowed into the back office and do not attend board and senior team

Page | 191

meetings. As a result they hardly glimpse the espoused doctrine, not that this is the best way in which to do so.

The informal doctrine is much less easy to identify. It is operant and variable. Sometimes it is difficult to detect because it is not officially stated and it tends to reside in every room of the YMCA Life building. Berryman notes that the informal doctrine is changeable (2009, p. 225) and this is the challenge for the YMCA. This informal, de facto YMCA doctrine is prone to changeability and is nebulous. The creedal references relate to young people and inclusivity. The challenge to the YMCA movement is that the informal de facto doctrine is at risk of running away from the espoused theology. This is not a wholly negative issue in itself, but without meaningful communication between the formal espoused and the informal operant doctrine that may result in a widening of the gap between the two.

*Informal* doctrine follows the focus on care for young people and the *formal* doctrine stagnates in the background to the point where the two can no longer interact. The meaning of the Christian basis is already diminished for those who do not understand it because they have never been drawn into a conversation and given opportunities to “own” the Christian basis. Ownership appears to have been the prerogative of the back office and the leadership. Ownership needs to be with the voices in the many rooms of the YMCA Life building. TAR with its focus on layered, multi-focussed conversations in various groups is a powerful proposition (Cameron et al., 2010). Such conversations could be happening in every room of the YMCA Life building.



I have made many references in this thesis to conversation and dialogue in the context of *voices in communication* as a central theme. What I am proposing is for the English YMCA to recognise that voices are in communication and that the YMCA has a choice whether to facilitate this communication inclusively so that all the voices of affinity can participate or whether to stand by and witness the *de facto* conversation struggle to make sense of the Christian basis and to finally abandon it as meaningless. A powerful model for a proposed commitment to *voices in communication* lies in the trinity. Gannon (2011) notes that the Catechism of the Catholic Church records the difference of relation in the trinity which is not a difference of essence.

The Nicene Creed embodies the three in perfect communication. At a human level perfect communication is not possible (Fox, 2006, p. 42). In the YMCA such a conversation is beyond organisational capacity but is nevertheless a powerful aspiration. What can be achieved is a commitment to engagement in dialogue and conversation with a mutual intention to move dialogue towards conversation and agreement wherever appropriate and possible.

### **The Four Attitudes Towards the Christian Basis**

Attitude is described by the Oxford Dictionary as “a settled way of thinking or feeling about something” (2013). As I worked through the research data I sought to identify what participants had expressed about their settled feeling about the Christian basis. It was apparent that these feelings would have been formed and moulded with reference to personal beliefs and religious, theological or secular frameworks. In seeking to explore the meanings attached to the Christian basis by the YMCA I in effect had to interpret the attitudes that people in the YMCA held about the YMCA’s espoused theology as partly represented by the overtly Christian registered charitable objects and the YMCA’s operant theology as represented by YMCA activities and services. In conversation with one of my academic supervisors, I realised that Berryman had sought to identify the meanings attached to children by the Church and he did so by interpreting the attitudes of theologians towards children in terms of espoused and operant theology.

By interpreting the data from the various sources in my research programme I was able to describe the attitudes towards the Christian basis in terms of ambivalence, irrelevance, ambiguity, indifference and graceful interaction. These attitudes are similar to those identified by Berryman in his research (2009) into the Church’s relationship with children. I have already described the limitations and strengths in aligning my research with his model (see page 188ff).

The facilitated groups with their mixed sets of participants were focussed on a common goal of achieving a better understanding of the Christian basis in the YMCA. They tended to demonstrate an enquiring but graceful interaction of the imperfections and contradictions inherent in the YMCA movement. The field visits, with their overtly Christian emphasis, demonstrate that Christian leaders with a degree of confidence investigate and enact with the Christian basis within an environment layered with *ambiguity*. While it is not possible to articulate the reasons for all the non responses to participation in my research, a small number of non-responding YMCAs were willing to indicate their reasons for not responding. They suggested that the Christian basis was largely irrelevant to their client group and to their work. They indicated a *degree of indifference* towards the Christian basis. I compared the results of the survey of YMCA charitable registrations on the Charity Commission's website with the results of the survey of YMCA websites (see page 143ff). The predominant emergent theme from the survey was one of *ambivalence and irrelevance*. All the YMCAs in England are registered with the Charities Commission and this key website frequently refers to the YMCA's accepted standard charitable objects, including the two overt Christian objects. There are subtle variations, but the fundamental registration for each YMCA is largely the same. However, this is not the same for the YMCA's own websites. The comparison between the websites of non-respondent YMCAs and their registrations on the Charities Commission website suggest a mismatch between their overt Christian basis registration and their vision, mission and values. These YMCA websites often do not make any reference to the Christian basis at all.

## Ambivalence and Irrelevance

Berryman (2009, p. 203) defines *ambivalence* as “holding two mutually conflicting feelings about a person, place, thing or action at the same time”. The website survey of non-participatory YMCAs (see page 140ff) juxtaposed against the survey of charitable registrations on the Charities Commission website (see page 142ff) highlights the ambivalence inherent in their attitudes towards the Christian basis. The majority of English YMCAs have charity registrations that refer specifically to the Paris Basis in the first two registered charitable objects. By way of an example one YMCA is registered with the Charities Commission for the purpose of:

**“(1) To unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be his disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his kingdom.  
(2) To lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in him”.**  
(Chantry YMCA, 2005).

Yet in the websites presented there are very few references to the Christian basis or Christian-based activities. References are made to the provision of leisure, sport and training for jobs. These are very relevant endeavours, but it is difficult to identify how these on their own achieve the fullness of the two objects for which the YMCA is registered. This ambivalence might simply be the result of historical differences in approach, in that the Charities Commission registration will probably pre-date the local YMCA’s own website by a considerable number of years. Conversely, it may be a deliberate attempt to deal with the Christian basis as something seen as irrelevant. Ambivalence and irrelevance, if they are all-pervading attitudes in a local YMCA, by definition, are likely to prevent those in YMCA Life from seeking the presence. Irrelevance may well result in the erosion and final eradication of the Christian basis in YMCA Life.

## **Ambiguity**

In YMCA Life, ambiguous attitudes towards the Christian basis are not necessarily wholly detrimental. They may simply be the result of a lack of understanding and education about the Christian basis. In fact, ambiguity in ignorance or innocence might enable one to push on a door in YMCA Life that opens the way to seeking the presence of God.

Berryman (2009, p. 205) identifies the main characteristic of ambiguity as “multiple meanings where context does not make the meaning clear”. Even the field visits which were populated almost exclusively by participants from YMCAs confident in their engagement with the Christian basis demonstrated inter-YMCA ambiguities. Where one local YMCA might insist on a weekly service of worship, or that every new staff member is a practising Christian by a particular definition, another local YMCA would forbid a weekly worship service and would specifically appoint non-Christians, confident in the strength of the senior leaders and trustees as Christians. In one of the field visits I was introduced to a weekly meeting where clients and staff engage in a discussion and debate about Christianity and spirituality. Guest speakers visit and no question is deemed inappropriate. The same YMCA has no requirement for operational staff to be Christians because the largely Christian board has decided that competency with vulnerable clients is vital to the success of the service. In another YMCA that responded to my email survey, none of the board nor senior team are, by their definition, practising Christians. This specific YMCA does not cater for any spiritual provision or faith activities. In comparing these examples, one can detect ambiguity. Yet both YMCAs are committed to the Christian basis and doors in YMCA Life are opened regularly to enable clients to seek God’s presence.

The challenge inherent in ambiguity was identified in my interpretation of the data from the facilitated groups as occurring when the ambiguous attitude is ignorant of the detail of the Christian basis or is influenced by voices that claim that the Christian basis is irrelevant. In this state, the ambiguity can result in mixed messages about the Christian basis and these, in turn, can degenerate the meaning of the Christian basis locally. If this was to happen in YMCA Life, it would result in doors only being partially opened, enough to see that the way towards seeking the presence of God, but not open enough to help individuals to move closer to the presence.

Berryman (2009, p. 206) provides an “Ambiguity Checklist” which is well aligned with the challenges faced in working out the meaning of the Christian basis in YMCA Life, as demonstrated in Table Five below and explained in more detail following the table:

<b><i>Berryman’s Ambiguity Checklist</i></b>	<b><i>YMCA Life Christian basis</i></b>
<b>Developmental Ambiguity</b> References to early, middle or late childhood.	References to the historical charitable objects, new interpretations or removed Christian basis.
<b>Sinfulness Ambiguity</b> Reference to the perceived inherent sinfulness of children or to them as blank pages.	References to the primary function of the Christian basis as addressing sin, or building relationships or both.
<b>Contingency Ambiguity</b> Do children stay the same or do they change and develop?	Does the enactment of the Christian basis have to remain the same as in the early YMCA or can it change and still remain the Christian basis?
<b>Pedagogical Ambiguity</b> Are children spiritual teachers or learners or both?	Is the Christian basis a static unchangeable formulation of words or does it grow and change with the YMCA while maintaining its potency?
<b>Spiritual Ambiguity</b> References to the differences between children knowing God and adults learning about and knowing of God.	References to contemplative engagement with the Christian basis in seeking the presence or in applying formulaic expressions of the Christian basis.
<b>Relationship Ambiguity</b> References to positive and negative relationships between adults and children.	References to the usefulness or otherwise of the Christian basis in helping the YMCA to understand its work.
<b>Reference Ambiguity</b> References to generalisations about children: are they individual realities or simply a group definition?	References to the Christian basis as an abstract concept or as an enactment of faith in the YMCA.
<b>Meta – Ambiguity</b> Combinations of the other ambiguities seeking to compound misconceptions about children.	Combinations of damaging attitudes aggravating existing negative views about the Christian basis.

**Table Five: Berryman’s Ambiguity Checklist Compared to YMCA Life Services (2009)**

**Developmental Ambiguity**

For Berryman, *Developmental Ambiguity* relates to confusion about references to early, middle or late childhood. The terms mean different things in different contexts. The YMCA's Christian basis is also referred to in different ways including historical charitable objects, new interpretations of the Christian basis or the removal of the Christian basis. Just as Berryman requests that clarification is sought and common definitions are agreed early in conversation, it may be beneficial for the YMCA to seek internal agreement on definitions of, and language regarding the Christian basis, faith and spirituality.

**Sinfulness Ambiguity**

Berryman refers to the perceptions that govern the view of children in relation to sin. He notes that these are often held unconsciously and range from interpreting children as inherently sinful, through to treating them as "blank pages" ready to be imprinted by the world. In similar ways there are ambiguities associated with references to the primary function of the Christian basis. The overtly Christian registered charitable objects infer an indirect relationship between young people and the need for them to achieve a better life. As a result, it is possible that for some people the Christian basis may be regarded as a means of addressing sin, or building relationships with God, or both.



### **Contingency Ambiguity**

Berryman asks if children stay the same or if they change and develop. He suggests that there is an irony in how adults sometimes act with an expectation that children ought to be constant and unchangeable, but that they are also expected to grow up and behave as adults. He suggests that children like change and are usually comfortable with growing, but that while they get taller, for instance, their basic character traits do not change. In terms of growth and development in the YMCA, does the enactment of the Christian basis have to remain the same as in the early YMCA or can it change and still remain the Christian basis? Is the Christian basis a static, unchangeable formulation of words, or does it grow and change with the YMCA while maintaining its potency? There are voices that expect the original Christian basis statements to be cast in stone, unchangeable and enacted even though the language used is difficult for many people to understand. These voices expect YMCA people to grow up and accept the Christian basis as it is. There are other voices that discard the Christian basis because they feel it to be unchangeable and they fail to recognise that it has the potential to grow and change to remain relevant.

### **Pedagogical Ambiguity**

Berryman asks if children are spiritual teachers or learners or both. This question overlays complex power relationships. In the YMCA, the same questions can be asked. Who is the teacher? Is it YMCA England or is it the local member YMCA or both? Within the context of *voices in communication* there is a *dialectic towards meaning* which means that the pedagogic process is one of mutuality and cooperation. All can be learners and teachers. The local member YMCA can teach the rest of the English YMCA

about the Christian basis and it can also learn from the rest of the English YMCA about the Christian basis. The goal is to move closer towards shared meaning attached to the Christian basis so that YMCA people can engage with it in confidence.

### **Spiritual Ambiguity**

Berryman refers to various theologians, each with unique interpretations of the differences and similarities between how children and adults “know”. Berryman suggests that children automatically know God and adults learn about knowing God. In the YMCA, there are various ambiguities relating to spirituality. A common definition is not possible for the reasons covered in my early research and literature review. There is also a degree of ambiguity about whether spirituality in the YMCA is based on contemplative engagement with the Christian basis in seeking the presence or in applying formulaic expressions of the Christian basis or non Christian spiritual practices.

### **Relationship Ambiguity**

Literature abounds with descriptions of positive and negative relationships between adults and children. Berryman describes how adults in the Church often see children as problematic. In the YMCA, such ambiguities are described in my *affinities* research. The Christian basis is understood as being helpful or unhelpful in building shared understandings of the work of the YMCA.

### **Reference Ambiguity**

Berryman asks the reader to consider generalisations about children: are they individual realities or simply a group definition? Do they symbolically represent symbolic maturity; or immaturity? Within the YMCA, references to the Christian basis may recognise it as an abstract concept or as an enactment of faith in the YMCA.

### **Meta-Ambiguity**

In Berryman, the final ambiguity is made up of combinations of the other ambiguities seeking to compound misconceptions about children. In the same way, combinations of damaging attitudes can have an aggravating effect on existing negative views about the Christian basis.

### **Indifference**

Berryman's definition (2009, p. 212) of indifference is a "lack of interest, enthusiasm or concern sometimes including a sense of aloofness, a sense of being too superior to care". It might be assumed that at least some of the non respondent YMCAs fit this definition in relation to the Christian basis and this view would be supported by the results of the web-based surveys. An attitude of indifference towards the Christian basis was identified in a number of YMCAs. These were ones that did respond, but declined my invitation. They did so on the basis of not being able to find a reason to engage in the Christian basis because it meant very little to the local YMCA. One respondent eventually answered a phone call and the senior staff member stated "[X] YMCA is very busy and we don't have time to talk about the Christian basis. In any case it does not feature in our work and there are more important matters."

In YMCA Life, indifference is innocuously dangerous in its ability to remove the ability to seek the presence of God. This is particularly true for spiritual education and reflection. In each and every room, one might expect to witness conversations that accept spirituality as a normal part of everyday YMCA life. One might expect to hear conversations between Christians and also between Christians and people of other or no faith. One would expect to see people through doors anticipating and expecting to engage the presence of God. Indifference might degrade these expectations. This has already happened in a significant number of YMCAs, as evidenced by the data from the facilitated groups. Voices with indifferent attitudes towards the Christian basis have resulted in YMCAs diminishing their relationship with the Christian basis.

### **Enquiring, Graceful Interaction**

During the facilitated group activities, people actively strove to make sense of the Christian basis, irrespective of their personal faith positions, by hearing the voices of others. There were times of dialogue in these sessions, but more often than not, these turned to conversation with agreement about aspects of the Christian basis and agreement about differences too. Berryman (2009, p. 213) defines grace as the “faithful maintenance of a relationship and the free gift of affection and mercy, even when the relationship is broken”. This is what I witnessed during the facilitated groups and I realised that this could be a means of maintaining *voices in communication* in the English YMCA, to make sense of the Christian basis and to give it meaning. In one facilitated session a participant stated “the YMCA has given me my confidence and being part of a discussion like this shows me that people care”. In another session, a participant suggested that “it would be great if we could have more meetings like this because even though we don’t agree on everything we can learn from each other”.

The facilitated groups highlighted a common attempt at understanding the Christian basis, irrespective of personal motivation or interpretation. Participants generally subscribed to, and were in support of, the Christian basis as defined with reference to history, in the context of inclusion and through a commitment to the associative nature of the YMCA. There were Christian voices that acknowledged an understanding of the first two overt charitable objects as focussed on association in relationship with Christ for the purposes of making Christ known to young people.

Nevertheless, even within those Christian voices, only a minority accepted the first two objects as a call to overt proselytising. Most Christian participant voices had, at some point in their work within the YMCA, made the transition in interpretation of the first two charitable objects towards relationship-based description without any reference to overt proselytising.

It is reasonable to suggest that in these facilitated groups, the most common response towards the meaning of the Christian basis, irrespective of faith position and irrespective of knowledge of the specific charitable objects, was one of reinterpretation of the Christian basis. In accordance with the ambiguities presented by Berryman and proposals for their treatment, it is possible that reinterpretation of the overtly Christian registered charitable objects is partly as a result of changes in *operant* theology (Cameron et al., 2010). The move might include, for example, redefinition of the *unsaved young client* into the *religiously naive young client*. It could mean a move away from an emphasis on the *sinful young client* towards the *spiritually immature young client* benefitting from spiritual education. It could mean a widened understanding of the various ways in which people understand how they come to *know* God.

This shift in the status is attributed by the YMCA to people who are outside of the Christian faith. From the research I gained a sense of the existence of a dilemma for the YMCA in how it references *unsaved* individuals. This seemed to result in reduced confidence in how participants addressed the needs of such individuals, often resulting in a switch to the default position of inclusivity. I suggest that reengagement in the YMCA's conversation with proactive communication to draw the *de facto operant*

theology and the *normative espoused theology* closer together could rebuild confidence in accepting the meaning of the Christian basis.

Having worked through the three aspects of my *voices in communication* framework, I have presented a detailed explanation of the interactions and complexities within the YMCA's relationship with its Christian basis. To complete my description of the relationship between the YMCA and its Christian basis in the next section I will briefly describe the relational changes that have occurred historically between the YMCA and its Christian basis.

### **Maturation of the Local YMCA Association in the Presence of an Aging Christian Basis**

In the previous sections, I described the relationship between the Christian basis and the YMCA with reference to my interpretation of data from the research. This provides a largely static point in time explanation of the relationship. In this section I conclude the description with reference to a more dynamic exploration in keeping with my intention stated in the historical survey (Chapter One) of describing the YMCA in terms of its development throughout its history. In this section I describe the relationship between the YMCA and its Christian basis by drawing on Berryman's explanation of attachment theory (2009, pp. 200-201). In my explanation, I use his description of attachment categories (2009, pp. 216-223) metaphorically to describe the relationship between YMCA voices and the Christian basis.

In the late Victorian period, Christianity expanded in England due to the Victorian Evangelical movement. Out of this increased Christian significance, the YMCA's Christian basis appeared and this gave birth to local YMCA associations across the country and then internationally. In England the growth of local YMCA Associations slowed in the 1970s (Portal, 1970) and it has been in numerical decline since then. The Christian basis, it would appear, is no longer producing new YMCAs in England. Local YMCA Associations however, have continued through that period to develop, grow, fail, learn and adapt. And from the research data it would appear that for many of these local YMCAs they have achieved all this whilst at the same time distancing themselves from the Christian basis.



In this description, the Christian basis is the parent now working out the relationship that it has with its adolescent child, the local member YMCA, which has now grown through its attachment stage (Berryman, p. 217). The Christian basis and the local YMCA are at the stage that Berryman describes as the time when “the parent and child work out their conscious understanding of dependence and independence in their relationship”.

During adolescent years there is often a crisis in relationship between child and parent. I suggest that the Christian basis and the local member YMCA have entered such a time of crisis. Often the crisis is temporary and the end result is a stronger more mature bond. Crisis is not always an entirely negative process. Crisis as a time of decision and as a time of change can both generate beneficial experiences out of which enhanced communication, care and empathy can grow. Crisis can even result in or trigger a *Kairos* moment, a time of decision brought on by a crisis where the decision affects the rest of our lives (Daniels, 2011, p. 176).

The ability to identify benefits from such a crisis is significantly influenced in parent-child relationships by the formative early years as described in attachment theory. Berryman (2009, pp. 216-217) quotes the two researchers who developed attachment theory, namely: Bowlby and Ainsworth. They note that between six to nine months, infants begin to crawl and “this increased mobility is restricted by separation anxiety. Children keep checking on the whereabouts of their parents to retreat to when they are anxious”. During Ainsworth’s *Strange Situation* studies, she identifies three attachment patterns which I have summarised in Table Six below:

<b><i>Attachment Behaviour Type</i></b>	<b><i>Parental Trigger</i></b>	<b><i>Response from the Child</i></b>
<b>Securely Attached</b>	Consistent, warm, available, attentive and caring.	Parent is a secure base from which to explore the world with confidence.
<b>Insecure Avoidant</b>	Insensitive, interfering, reactionary and rejecting.	After suffering numerous rejections the child ignores the parent.
<b>Insecure Ambivalent</b>	Inconsistent responses, caring at times and not caring or responding at other times.	The child does not explore very much and instead constantly checks where the parent is and then reacts against the parent or clings to the parent.

**Table Six: A Summary of Berryman's Description of Attachment Theory.**

In the metaphor of attachment theory as a descriptor for the history of types of relationship between the Christian basis and local YMCAs, the local YMCA as child has reacted in certain ways as a result of the expectations made by the Christian basis, as parent. The history cannot change, but the parent (Christian basis as *espoused* theology) can change and this will have an effect on the child (the local member YMCA with its *operant* theology).

Attachment theory is not just a matter of infancy, but research has extended the theory to its long-term impact on adult life and how adults relate to each other (Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy, 1985). There is also a well-developed research tradition about how attachment styles correlate with adult styles of relating to God (Kirkpatrick and Shaver, 1990). In YMCA Life, the relationship with the Christian basis might be one that is *securely attached*. My historical survey suggests that this was the type of relationship

between the Christian basis and local YMCAs in the early stages of the YMCA's development. It was difficult to separate the Christian basis from anything that the YMCA delivered. As local YMCAs grew, developed and broadened to accommodate clients, funding and political change, some managed to maintain a healthy but challenging relationship with the Christian basis. Others challenged the relevance of the parent Christian basis and estrangement followed as insecure avoidant behaviour became the norm. It is apparent from the research that there are YMCAs today that remain estranged from the Christian basis.

There is another type of local YMCA relationship with the Christian basis that arises from the attachment theory metaphor. In this relationship the initial positive relationship becomes less positive and secure and is finally permeated with inconsistent responses. This inconsistent insecure ambivalent relationship mirrors the *ambivalent attitudes* described starting from page 196 and is the cause of stunted growth in the relationship between some local YMCAs and the Christian basis.

Having used the metaphor of attachment theory to describe the dynamic relationship between the Christian basis and local YMCAs, I now return to Terrien's model of elusive presence to also demonstrate the dynamic relationship between the YMCA and God's presence.

## **God of the Base, Legacy and Loss in the YMCA**

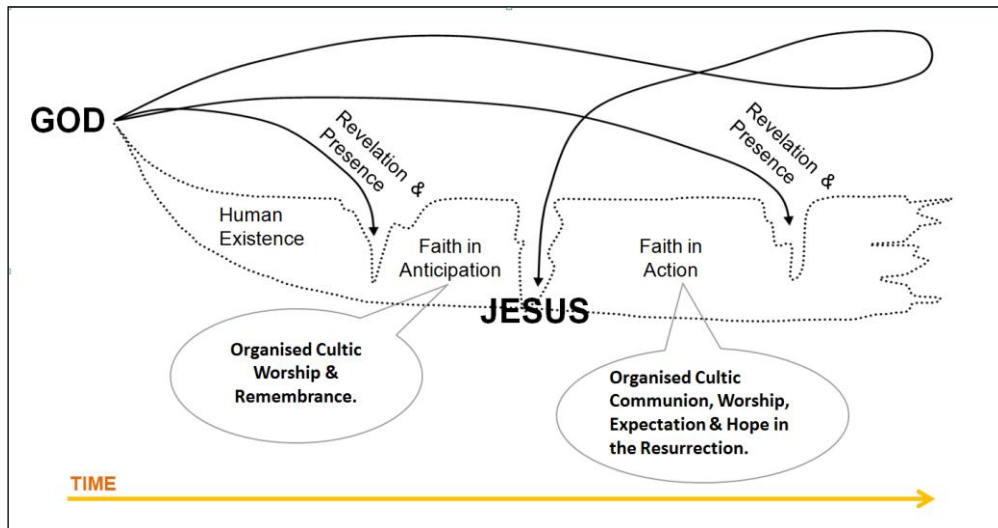
My historical survey described the YMCA as predominantly a faith legacy organisation, where the faith basis has importance in a historical context and diminishing contemporary significance. The choice for the YMCA is whether it wishes to strengthen and build up its faith basis so that it moves on from a legacy position towards reestablishment of its Christian faith basis as the foundation of the movement in England. Alternatively, the YMCA in England could choose to dispense with the Christian basis as the YWCA and other organisations have, and then rename or rebrand to avoid any confusion.

A Christian faith-based organisation by definition will seek the presence of the Trinitarian God amidst its history, life, experience and future. I propose that the expression of the Christian basis, in keeping with Terrien's model of elusive presence, has its own elusive nature. Furthermore, if God is elusive and yet present in absence (Terrien, 2000, p. 320) then that will have an impact on the engagement with and enactment of the Christian basis. There are confident, loud voices in the YMCA research that would expect to see the Christian basis enacted as defined by the overtly Christian registered charitable objects. In this sense, the expectation would be that God's presence would automatically be present, i.e. visible as in conspicuous, manifest, apparent and available. In opposition to this position, other indifferent and dismissive voices, sometimes silent or quiet but not often loud, expect the presence to be nonexistent or at least absent, lacking or missing. Yet, according to Terrien, it matters little what people think or do, because God's elusive presence avoids capture, perception, comprehension and memory, while remaining impervious to human

controlling interests. The Hebraic traditions and indeed the entire literature of the Bible portray Yahweh as coming to people, not the people commanding the appearance of Yahweh. Biblical people are always surprised by Yahweh and when and how God arrives. Whatever meaning the YMCA movement in England attributes to the Christian basis, God will be present or absent by God's choice. As Terrien suggests (2000, p. 476), any attempts by humans to cause the appearance or absence of the presence actually causes the vision of the presence to vanish.

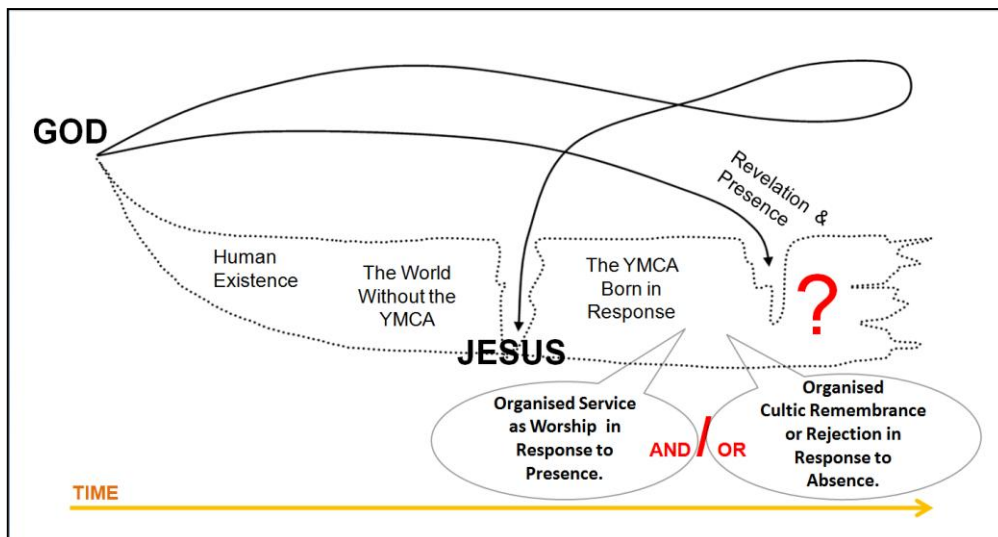
The religion of post-exilic Judaism and of the early Christians is permeated by the cultic recollection of their past experience of Yahweh's activity in their world and the eschatological and proleptically appropriated expectation of the presence of Yahweh among people. The sense of presence is persistently compounded with an awareness of absence. The prophets, the psalmists and the poet Job often allude to their sense of isolation, not only from the community of people, but also from the proximity of God. Theophanies of the heroic past are not often repeated. Prophetic visions are few and far between. Even within the life-span of people like Abraham, Moses and the prophets, the immediacy of the Godhead is experienced only for a few fleeting moments. For much of the time the presence is absent, but present in memory and cultic proceedings.

Figure Four below, in accordance with Terrien's model, gives a graphical representation of the relationship between God's presence and the cultic response to absence. During the absences, organised cultic worship is instigated for worship and remembrance. These inevitably attempt to draw the presence of God into the present moment.



**Figure Four: A representation of Terrien's model of Elusive Presence and Human Response**

In Figure Five below, I have taken Terrien's model and adapted it to the YMCA's relationship with the elusive presence of God. The YMCA is created in response to the Great Commandment and the call to discipleship. The Christian basis is established resulting in organised service in response to the calling and presence. However, further responses develop over time as the YMCA integrates into the world and people forget about the presence or enter the organisation having never known about the presence.



**Figure Five: A Representation of Terrien's model of Elusive Presence and Human Response**

The YMCA with its eclectic mix of people, including those with and without faith, will hopefully remain a place where people are often surprised by the emergence of the presence of God in the strangest of situations. For such a manifestation to be recognised, the YMCA needs to remain open to enabling YMCA people to have the opportunity to open doors and cross thresholds in YMCA Life so that they can seek the presence of God.

The theological significance of the door metaphor is important for the YMCA. Doors are places of entry and exist representing decision-making moments where crossing the threshold of an open door symbolises enactment that follows a decision. The YMCA Life building may have many doors and therefore many thresholds, but if the doors are shut the thresholds are invisible and enactment is not possible. In the UNIFY 2012 Conference reported on page 144, one of the artefacts that participants built was an open door with a beacon of light in it and a hand (voice) beaconing people to enter. Doors are places from where the hand of hospitality is extended and the hand of hospitable friendship is extended over the threshold of the doorway. The theological purposes of hospitality are many, but I wish to highlight two that are interrelated. One theological result of extending hospitality is simply to enable people to care for other people by meeting their needs. It enables people to serve other people. Another theological result of caring is the practical demonstration of love as representative of an encounter with God.

Ensuring that the YMCA Life building's external doors are open and staffed is vital if people are going to be made to feel welcome in the YMCA. That initial first step of entry across the threshold is difficult for any stranger, but once inside the individual will also

Page | 215

have to negotiate doors and if left to their own devices may have to waste time in order to find their way around YMCA Life. A much more welcoming approach based on hospitality will save them time and energy. In the field visits I witnessed local member YMCAs committed to providing hospitality to the weary traveller or visitor. Not only did these YMCAs go outside to invite people in, but they also made sure that they did all they could to meet the needs of the visitors. It is this openness to serve that is a hallmark of the YMCA movement and is representative of how the YMCA might seek to serve.

Perhaps some YMCAs that are confident in their interpretation of the Christian basis are comfortable in welcoming guests in to take care of their needs and to “witness” to them. However, what happens when the visitors bring the presence of God with them? Is the YMCA willing to be served then? The three visitors at Mamre (Genesis 18:1-10) brought encouragement and hope to Abraham. He and Sarah provided for the three strangers, but it was actually the strangers who brought the word of God to them. In other words, the YMCA can also be where Christ enters into the YMCA. If the doors are opened at the sound of Christ’s knocking, then Christ will be visible through thresholds pointing towards Christ: “here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me” (Revelation 3:20).

Thresholds are also traditional locations of conversations, the sharing of messages and the passing of information. Thresholds provide places where voices in the YMCA can enter into conversation and exchange information and ideas. The framework of this

Page | 216



research, *voices in communication*, has highlighted a variety of voices and not all are participating in the Movement Conversation. It is debatable whether the current Movement Conversation is actually capable of engaging with all of these voices. I suggest that the less confident voices, the disengaged voices and the silent, disaffiliated or marginal voices are not participating in the conversation. To remedy this the YMCA might wish to consider the benefits of a voices programme as a means to clearing the doorways to reveal thresholds over which people can pass to engage in conversations. In so doing, the English YMCA can reinvigorate the Movement Conversation to include those voices described in this study. In turn, this could help to build the YMCA's understanding and ownership of its Christian basis, so that its meaning can become a source of confidence and motivation.

## **Is the YMCA's *de facto* Doctrine Sufficient for the Future?**

The YMCA has, as suggested by the research, arrived at a point in its history where there is a gap between the YMCA's espoused, normative theology and the operant, *de facto* theology of the local member YMCAs. The question with regards to the YMCA's position is whether this operant, *de facto* theology is capable of bringing together all the voices identified in this study to enter into a conversation that will take the YMCA into the future together with its Christian basis, its inclusive practice and its people irrespective of their beliefs. If left to run its course will this *de facto* doctrine unify and strengthen the association by building on the meaning attached to the Christian basis or will it erode the meaning of the Christian basis to the point where it is meaningless?

I am of the view that the research suggests that the participating YMCAs are facing a crisis in their understanding and enactment of the Christian basis and have done so for a considerable time. These statements form a description of the actual, but informal, unofficial position statement for the Christian basis in participating YMCAs. It suggests that the participants have already inadvertently produced their own local versions of *de facto* doctrines and that this was achieved over time through an invisible, uncoordinated, unplanned set of responses to changes in society, legislation and in the YMCA. What they are left with is a doctrine of diminishment that confers growing irrelevance to the Christian basis.

The ongoing loss or fragmentation of meaning attached to the Christian basis is not inevitable, but the YMCA movement in England has to decide what course of action to take. The research and participants did not reveal a way forward. There were voices that

suggested that the Christian basis ought to be brought back into a position of central eminence. I question what that would mean for the groups of voices that seemed bewildered by the Christian basis. Those voices in general demonstrated their respect for the Christian basis, but this was at a distance and often their quiet or silent voices revealed a lack of confidence in their understanding of the Christian basis.

The research did describe the *status quo* of the participant's relationship with the Christian basis. This is a mixed set of messages dependent, as might be expected, on the motivations of the individuals involved in the research. Whether the voices were confident, strong and powerful, quiet, silent and powerless, or faithful or faithless, none was able to suggest a path into the future that could draw together all of the voices within the English YMCA movement, in ways that would maintain the associative spirit of the English YMCA. This takes this thesis back to the beginning and the historical survey in which I described the English YMCA as potentially a faith legacy organisation.

Following the research, I am of the view that the English YMCA is far more fragmented in its understanding of the meaning of the Christian basis than I had originally predicted in the historical survey. The meaning of the Christian basis is more dispersed between base, legacy and displacement than I had predicted. Clearly, there are participant YMCAs that have sought to develop a local understanding of the Christian basis and are seeking to base their work and model on the Christian basis.

There are other participant YMCAs that have opted to place the Christian basis in a legacy position and not to confer any contemporary significance. YMCA's with a displaced Christian basis were also visible in the research. In facilitating a Movement Conversation, YMCA England is attempting to make sense of this dispersal, but I suggest that the research indicates limited progress so far.

In returning to the historical survey, the relevance of the national body in each country is also reiterated (see Chapter One). The Paris Basis was defined as the international agreement or intention between national YMCA movements to remain focussed on the Christian basis. In turn, the national movements were required to reach agreements internally with local member YMCAs in each country as to how they would enact the Christian basis locally. This appears to be what YMCA England is attempting to do through the Movement Conversation. Unless all the groups of voices are involved in this conversation, the result is unlikely to be inclusive. Nevertheless, the national role is key to finding a way forward.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In this conclusion, I present the essence of how I have addressed each of the doctoral elements beginning with the defined gap in knowledge identified in the YMCA. I follow with a description of the implications of the research for the YMCA and the implications of the research for my own work in the English movement. I end the conclusion with recommendations for the YMCA in keeping with the expectations inherent in a professional doctorate.

### **Doctorateness and Originality**

This research has been conducted in accordance with the description given by Trafford and Leshem of the nature of “doctorateness” with specific reference to the elements set out by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) (Trafford and Leshem, 2008, p. 34). In addressing the meaning of the Christian basis in the YMCA, I have paid attention to the elements defined by the QAA as essential in doctoral study including the creation and interpretation of new knowledge through original research; a systematic acquisition of a body of knowledge and conceptualisation in ways that effectively make sense of knowledge through the application of appropriate research techniques.

Through my literature review and intensive and extensive reading, I came to the view that while the Christian basis was spoken about regularly in the YMCA it had not been studied recently with any academic rigor in ways to identify its meanings in terms of relevance and its relationship with people in the contemporary YMCA. Therefore, my proposition was that people working in it were appointed on the understanding that the YMCA, is Christian-based; that the corporate and collective agreed means of association

Page | 221

were located primarily in the Christian basis; and that the YMCA attached significant meaning to its Christian basis, while operating within an inclusive environment. This perspective supported by an academic research programme demonstrated the originality of my research.

Plausible descriptions of the meaning of Christian basis appeared to be non-existent in the English YMCA thus providing an important and unique point of entry into addressing a gap in knowledge about the Christian basis in the YMCA. I gave consideration to how I could construct a research question that would enable me to define a conceptual framework from which I could design a research programme with robust methodology and effective methods for data collection. The research question that was specifically intended to address that gap in knowledge was:

### **What Meaning Does the YMCA Attribute to its Christian basis?**

I believe that whilst there are ongoing conversations in the YMCA about the Christian basis, this question has not been faced or openly addressed in the English YMCA before, nor do I believe that any attempt has been made previously to find a means of bringing YMCA people of faiths and of no faith together to communicate specifically about the contemporary meaning of the Christian basis. As a result of being focussed, my research produced good data and a legitimate means of addressing the issues surrounding the meaning and relevance of the Christian basis in ways that can help the YMCA to face its reluctance to address those issues. This was a risky strategy but one in which the risks were partly mitigated by the degree of academic rigor applied to the research and its

framework which I defined as *voices in communication*, where thematic descriptions of *voice* were identified in terms of *audibility*, *attitude* and *affinity*.

Despite the diverse nature of my data sources, I identified a shared commonality within the conceptual framework, namely that data would be derived from voices that were in communication or could be encouraged to enter into communication. This in turn helped me to formulate my triangulated dialectic towards meaning as the methodological means of drawing together different sources of data. By identifying and engaging with theories and concepts that indicated synergy with my work to make sense to the data, I was able to provide a coherent set of answers to my research question.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

The research identified a number of characteristics that describe the relationship between participants, the Christian basis and the meanings that they attach to it. These characteristics can be considered as the factual findings of the study and they have a bearing on the relationship and include the following:

- I. The majority of participants felt that they had been appointed on the understanding that the YMCA is Christian-based, but very few had actually been given an opportunity, or felt it necessary, to make sense of the implications of this. Once they were in post, the Christian basis faded into the background for most participants.
- II. The Christian basis does not provide a universally accepted meaning among participants even though it has status attached to it. Among many of the participants,

the Christian basis is perceived to have a low contemporary value and meaning. For some it is perceived to be an obstacle to their work; for others it is unnecessary and irrelevant. For a few, it is a reason amongst other more important reasons why they work in the YMCA. For most participants it has more meaning as a historical artefact than as a contemporary motivation.

- III. Among the participants it was not possible to identify a universally agreed understanding of the Christian basis. The Paris Basis and the overtly Christian registered charitable objects were certainly not considered by most participants to be an acceptable explanation of the Christian basis. The more that the language used focussed on care and the less that it referenced overt Christian language, the more acceptable it became as a representation of the Christian basis.
- IV. For the majority of participants, the actual corporate and collective agreed means of association is care for young people within an inclusive environment, without reference to the Christian basis. The Christian basis is considered by a significant number of participants to be divisive and damaging to the associative, inclusive nature of the YMCA.
- V. Among the minority of participants who embrace an overtly Christian-based understanding of the Christian basis, most are in leadership roles and are attempting to make sense of it for their local YMCAs. Nevertheless, the research suggests that the majority of local YMCAs may not have the ability and inclination for this type of sense making.



## **The Implications of the Research for the English YMCA**

In this section I propose that the research has identified three key implications in the sample: a) ineffective communication between YMCAs, b) disjointed 'islands of understanding' about the Christian basis and c) the threat of informal disassociation.

On reflection, it would appear that the participants are attempting to maintain a holding position in relation to its Christian basis. There are local member YMCAs that are confidently and intentionally maintaining a meaningful, inclusive relationship with the Christian basis. However, there is also evidence that other YMCA staff, volunteers and trustees are disengaged and informally disassociated from the Christian basis and the movement as a whole. To engage the silent and less vocal will require those who are confident to encourage others to participate as valued *voices in communication*. The research could not identify all aspects of the relationship between the Christian basis and the YMCA, but in working with groups of participants and in engaging in conversations with them I was able to identify a set of meanings through their communications which, while not representative of the whole YMCA in England, do provide insights into what participants understood as the meaning of the Christian basis for them. Upon closer scrutiny, these insights were shown to be multifaceted and variable as well as complex in their nature.

Different voices were engaged in different forms of communication. Some voices were in conversation, which I defined to be those cooperating and collaborating in seeking ways of sharing and understanding the Christian basis. Other voices were dialogical, engaged in debate and argument. In addition, various silent or very quiet voices were

evident by their absence or low levels of verbalisation. These quiet and often silent voices were not neutral or irrelevant. On the contrary, they interpreted layers of meaning, often in contradiction to the espoused theology as contained in the overtly Christian registered charitable objects defined. In the sample they could easily have gone unnoticed, but have actually provided deep insights.

Inclusivity appeared as the key junction of commonality at which high levels of agreement and conformity are demonstrated amidst much disagreement about other things. Voices in disagreement about the Christian basis often agreed during the research on the importance and centrality of inclusivity. A highly developed understanding of the concept of inclusivity was shared almost universally between people in the YMCA, whereas the levels of understanding of the Christian basis were lower and less shared. Closer examination of the data suggested that universal inclusivity mostly extended into the delivery of services. It was also spoken about when Christians met together, confident in being welcoming. Where it appeared to be lacking was in the active pursuit of conversations that included the informally disassociated, disengaged voices in opposition as demonstrated through their open opposition or complete silence.

The relationship between local YMCAs and the Christian basis in the research may be described as including aspects of ambivalence, ambiguity or indifference. This appears to be due to a lack, over time, of the provision of opportunities for engagement in conversations about the Christian basis and its meaning within local YMCAs. It is also the result of the very nature of the structure of the YMCA and of the central and senior

Page | 226

location of responsibility and authority for the Christian basis. In my analysis, there were hints that the Christian basis has been, for some local boards, a subject too difficult to address resulting in isolationist tendencies in some and a stratification of the Christian basis conversation. These boards might attempt to address it through internal conversations in meetings or through devotions, etc. but without reference to the wider team of people in the local YMCA. Furthermore, the Christian basis might just be ignored altogether leaving the wider team confused or frustrated.

Two conciliatory, mediating and often mitigating forces within this multifaceted communication were identified as inclusivity, and to a lesser degree, association. The associative nature of the YMCA's federated structure forms a somewhat benign force within the YMCA. Whereas the concept of inclusivity has powerful reference points in law, equality and organisational culture, the concept of association in the YMCA is located in the charitable objects and specifically within those that are focussed on the Christian faith. The research suggests that there are voices that appear to be comfortable with the concepts of association, namely thinking, working and being together in pursuit of a common goal, when it involves the delivery of generic or secular services, but are less comfortable when association is linked with common expressions of the Christian basis. Other voices are comfortable with both.

*The first implication for the English YMCA is that the forms of communication about the Christian basis that used to be considered to be effective are unlikely to be very effective in future. The research suggests that the range of relationships between participants and the Christian basis is very mixed, variable and not as homogenous as was described in the early accounts of the YMCA's history. New ways of engaging all YMCA people, irrespective of their faith position is necessary if the English YMCA is going to maintain a dynamic relationship with its Christian basis.*

I found that the YMCA's Christian basis is located centrally, within the proposition, and so the aim of my research was to identify the meaning attached by the English YMCA to its Christian basis. By engaging with voices from within the YMCA, I was able to frame the research within a qualitative, inductive, small-scale project in the English YMCA. This resulted in non-generalisable plausible propositions concerning the meaning of the Christian basis that are high in validity, but low in reliability. This approach was appropriate, given the federated nature of the YMCA movement in England with its high levels of local variability in terms of organisational size, services and approaches to the Christian basis.

In response to the question of what meaning does the YMCA attribute to its Christian basis, the research reveals a complex relationship between local member YMCAs and the Christian basis. This relationship is uniquely local, dynamic and evolving, which has resulted in local YMCAs holding between them a range of local meanings in keeping with the federated structure of the English YMCA. There are local member YMCAs for which the Christian basis is central and a key motivation for their work. For other local YMCAs, the Christian basis is a source of confusion and there appears to be little incentive for them to redirect resources into exploring the meaning of the Christian basis locally.

The YMCA movement in England took the decision earlier on in its history to locate responsibility for the enactment of the Christian basis with Boards and senior staff in local YMCAs and, as a consequence, some Boards have not been able to make practical sense of the Christian basis in the work of their staff teams. As a result, some service staff who define themselves as non Christian have simply 'got on' with delivering care

without any reference to the Christian basis or its meaning. The same might be true for self defined Christian service staff, but in both situations the lack of clarity from the local leadership in terms of what the YMCA's Christian basis means and how it is enacted has resulted in these staff not having any guidance to engage with that could direct or encourage them to identify the enactment of the Christian basis in their roles.

Staff and volunteers may be less involved in consciously enacting the Christian basis and they may not be overly concerned about it because irrespective of their personal view and beliefs, the Christian basis appears to be an irrelevance as a means and motivation in their achievement of high quality work. Nevertheless, these individuals are faithfully undertaking their roles and are probably enacting the essence of the Christian basis on a daily basis without realising it.

Another related point of interest, concerns self identified Christian staff working in local YMCAs, but left to interpret the Christian basis for themselves. It seemed to me that in these situations the interpretation of the Christian basis was often based on the individual's conception of Christian practices. Little attention was paid in some cases to the overtly Christian registered charitable objects and, in other cases, there were interpreted possibly in line with what might be perceived as a direct reference to Victorian YMCA cultural expectations, including overt and confrontational proselytising.

I did identify examples of YMCAs that have sought to interpret the Christian basis for their workforce and in some of these examples staff and volunteers appeared more confident about the Christian basis and its meaning. Encouragingly, there are local

YMCAs where the Christian basis has been embraced and there are examples of where the meaning of the Christian basis is central to the existence of the local YMCA. It appears that where the meaning is explored with open, inclusive intentions then this results in a relationship with the Christian basis that enhances inclusivity and meaning. These few local YMCAs demonstrate that it is still possible, in post-modernity, for the YMCA to maintain a relationship with the Christian basis that is rich in meaning and is central to the quest for openness, transparency, inclusivity and growth.

*The second implication for the English YMCA is that the somewhat disjointed approach to the Christian basis, has created 'remote islands of understanding' where each 'local island' YMCA holds unique views about the Christian basis. These 'islands of understanding' may well have existed throughout the history of the YMCA simply as a result of its ecumenical origins, but they would have included broadly Christian understandings of the Christian basis. However, the difference identified in the research was the existence of 'islands of understanding' with and without a Christian faith perspective. To work within this context successfully, the English YMCA may have to adjust its expectations of what local member YMCAs actually understand about the Christian basis. Insensitive communications that ignore this issue are likely to be offensive to some local member YMCAs.*

The research has also identified a degenerative relationship between participant YMCAs and the Christian basis. The responses, non responses, web surveys and conversations suggest that for many local YMCAs the relevance of the Christian basis is historical and fading. For these YMCAs, there is a crisis of meaning where there is a divergence of relevance and meaning coupled with a widening separation between the local YMCA and the Christian basis. It appears that this process is largely hidden or in the background, but once this process has started, it gains strength and becomes difficult to reverse. This is partly because it begins in the ranks of leadership and governance and is imbibed by staff and volunteers. It might be linked to a deficit in the ability of local YMCAs to

Page | 230

recruit and maintain competent skilled leaders and board members who also subscribe to the Christian basis. A side effect of when the governance and leadership lose their relationship with the Christian basis, is an unintentional local disassociation.

In the sample where I identified a local YMCA that is not in association with the movement, I inevitably found that this breakdown had occurred slowly amidst the progress of time. It might have been triggered by a disagreement many years before or it might have simply just happened as relationships change with the retirement of trustees and staff. The effect, in terms of the meaning of the Christian basis locally however, can be devastating. Once disassociation occurs, a local YMCA loses its ability to associate and this is a critical component in establishing meaning and in maintaining a healthy relationship with the Christian basis.

Another dynamic layer exists within the multifaceted mix of relationships that YMCA people have with the Christian basis, including those relationships that are faith-based and those that are not faith-based. This dynamic layer is concerned with those who recognise the potential and possibility of God being present in the life of the YMCA movement and those who do not. Within the group that recognises the potential for God's presence there are those who believe that certain actions and behaviours will summon the presence and that they have the means to do so because they inhabit a place of understanding and righteous affiliation with presence through their chosen ways of enacting the Christian basis e.g. devotions, prayer meetings etc. However, there are others in this group who also acknowledge the possibility of presence, but refuse to assume a controlling or attractive interest in the presence. In response to all of these

aspects of relationship and expectation, the safest response is to refer to Terrien's understanding of a God, whose presence and absence is mysterious and elusive but nevertheless is available when people recognise each other and cooperate for the benefit of others. In framing presence in this way, the YMCA's associative nature is a powerful tool in the enactment of the Christian basis. The research suggests that the associative-dissociative dynamic in the participant YMCAs is a critical measure of whether conversations about the Christian basis are possible or not.

*The third implication for the English YMCA is the impact of the associative-dissociative dynamic in local member YMCAs. The ability of local member YMCAs to associate with other local member YMCAs is a critical element in maintaining a healthy relationship with the Christian basis. It is also a key indicator of the health of the English YMCA. The research suggests that informal disassociation amongst the sample was far more widespread than has been acknowledged. It may be possible that a local member YMCA might informally disassociate from the movement because its leadership is of the view that the English YMCA is "not being Christian enough". However, the research did not indicate this as a major issue. It is far more likely that a local member YMCA will informally disassociate because it no longer accepts the Christian basis or because of some other disagreement. The reality of informal disassociation is that if left unaddressed it could result in the disintegration of the English YMCA through the mechanism of distancing.*



### **The Implications of the Research for My Work in the YMCA**

I chose to pursue a professional doctorate because I expected to utilise the learning gained from the doctoral process to change my understanding of the YMCA and its Christian basis. Furthermore, I expected the research process and findings to change my work, my leadership style and my relationship with the Christian basis. I am now able to reflect very positively and realistically on how much of this has been achieved or initiated.

Prior to embarking on the doctoral journey, my view of the relationship between the YMCA and Christian basis was simplistic in the sense that my understanding was based on my interpretation of the charitable objects and on what my job description defined my role to be as a Christian leader. Following the research I am now of the view that the YMCA and its relationship with the Christian basis is more complex than I had originally envisaged. I also believe that it is much richer and has more potential than I had originally envisaged. My understanding of the nature of the Christian basis has moved from one based on my experiences of church life, to one that recognises that the YMCA is not a church, but is an integral part of the Ecclesia. I believe that this has positive implications for the YMCA and my role in it because it provides a degree of freedom to establish ways of working and service that do not have to conform to set ecclesial formulas.

On a more practical level, I intend to compare the national YMCA INSYNC standards with those contained in the National Society's Self Evaluation Toolkit for Church Schools. This will help to identify inclusive measurable standards for Christian distinctiveness for the YMCA based on existing good practice.

This research has provided the means to interpret the Christian basis with staff, board members and volunteers in a far more meaningful way. An example of this is what I have called the "strategic primer". It is a simple document that defines the relationship between the board's role and all other roles in the local YMCA. These relationships are described in the context of how any single role fulfils the charitable objects of the YMCA. I have reflected on the charitable objects and have been able to define them in two complementary ways, using overtly Christian language and overtly secular language. This means that when a job role is advertised we can now explain the role to prospective candidates in terms of how it fulfils the Christian basis using appropriate language. Furthermore, job descriptions can now be written to include inclusive definitions of how the particular role serves the Christian basis, irrespective of whether the candidate is Christian or not.

### **Recommendations for the English YMCA to Consider**

In response, I have three recommendations to make. First, as noted on page 49, YMCA England has a commitment following the World YMCA Centennial Conference held in Paris in 1955, to ensure that the Christian basis is enacted locally in YMCAs. At the 1955 conference, national representative YMCAs were charged with the task of ensuring that the Christian basis remains central in the work of the organisation. National representative YMCAs were expected to reach agreements with local YMCAs on the enactment of the Christian basis as required by the Paris Basis. This commitment was defined as the international agreement or intention between national YMCA movements to remain focussed on the Christian basis. My recommendation is for YMCA England to review its role under that 1955 agreement to ensure that YMCA England and local member YMCAs are confident with the current arrangements.

Second, the YMCA England sponsored *Movement Conversation* is in principle a laudable attempt at addressing the issues of relationship and association in terms of the Christian basis. However, for it to be an effective conversation it has to engage those *distant* local YMCAs that are no longer in association with the movement and are not maintaining any meaningful relationship with the Christian basis. If the Movement Conversation is to be maintained successfully, it needs to be strengthened and resourced differently. For example, a programme similar to the one proposed by Cameron et al. of TAR has potential in being able to draw in the silent, distant, disassociated voices who are on the edge of the YMCA. These voices offer different perspectives in addition to those which are confident and more vocal.

Third, from the facilitated groups, I am of the opinion that the quality assurance arrangements in the English YMCA, as robust as they are, are in deficit as far as the Christian basis is concerned. The decision not to dedicate a standard to the Christian basis and instead to seek a Christian *golden thread* throughout the set of standards is an attractive, but unworkable position because it may diminish the importance and value of the Christian emphasis in the daily work of a local member association. Contrast the YMCA's approach with that of church schools, where they are required to participate in a "Framework for Inspection and a Self-Evaluation Toolkit". These are designed to test the distinctive Christian nature of church schools, thereby providing guidance on how to ensure that the Christian emphasis is integral to everything that a school does. Such an approach in the English YMCA movement might help local YMCAs to make sense of the Christian basis.

It seems appropriate in these closing paragraphs to acknowledge the generosity of spirit, the gift of time, good wishes and kindness shared in overflowing measure by colleagues in the YMCA as I've worked on this thesis. Perhaps this should come as no surprise to anyone who has encountered YMCA people anywhere in the world. The example for such generous behaviour was set by George Williams throughout his lifetime. Even in old age when he was close to death and almost too weak to stand, he answered the call to address a meeting and, in his weakness, asked a friend to read a speech on his behalf (Hodder-Williams, 1906, p. 313). The opening line was one of encouragement and is just as poignant and applicable today as it was then: "My word to you tonight would be 'Go Forward' and expect great things from God".

The YMCA's history rests upon the lives of people who, over the years, have given of themselves for the sake of others. The YMCA brings the very best out in people whether they are serving or being served. The challenges and benefits faced by the English YMCA today are actually a testament to the triumphs over adversity experienced by George Williams and his friends in 1844 and thereafter. The issues and dilemmas discussed in this thesis are not there to cause anyone to shy away, but rather are the call to perseverance. Hodder-Williams, the grand-nephew and biographer of George Williams notes in the closing paragraphs of the biography (1906, p. 346) that the people of the YMCA are "cast in an heroic mould" and are "capable of adapting themselves to new conditions as they arise". He concludes that "above all else" YMCA people "must have faith in youth itself". The primary call of this thesis is to encourage "heroic" YMCA people to adapt to the new conditions faced in this generation so that, in future generations, young people may continue to benefit from and contribute to the YMCA.

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## APPENDICES



## APPENDIX ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

ANGLIA RUSKIN UNIVERSITY

MEETING THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YMCA – TOWARDS  
A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH.

David Sargent

SID 0717067

September 2008

## **STAGE ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW**

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of Anglia Ruskin University for the Degree of Professional  
Doctorate in Practical Theology

This research programme was carried out in collaboration with the Cambridge Theological  
Federation.

I) CONTENTS	PAGE
ii) Abstract	3
iii) Introduction and Motivation	4
1. A Proposed Activity Plan	5
2. A Brief History of the YMCA movement and its Christian basis	7
2.1 A Blossoming of the Movement	7
2.2 Responding to Need in Contemporary Local YMCAs	8
3. Spirituality in the YMCA – Towards a Focus on Spiritual Development	9
3.1 Identifying the Current Nature of Spirituality in the YMCA	9
3.2 A Broad Categorisation of Definitions	10
4. Dialogue With Selected Key Authorities On the Spirituality of Young People.	12
4.1 Key Voices for the Spirituality of Young People	12
<b>4.2 The Thematic Trends Identified in the Key Voices</b>	13
<b>4.3 Implications for the YMCA</b>	15
5. Defining Spirituality in terms of Drivers and Corollaries	16
5.1 Journey and Change	16
5.2 Life Experience and Reflection	17
5.3 Relationships and Community	18
5.4 Narratives and Meaning	19
6. Conclusion	20
Bibliography	21

## **ii) Abstract**

# **ENABLING THE YMCA MOVEMENT IN ENGLAND TO MEET THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE.**

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SID 0717067

September 2008

The YMCA has to become more effective in meeting spiritual needs of young people irrespective of their personal beliefs and faith positions. To assist with the process, six activities have been identified that will help the YMCA to improve its ability to cater for the spiritual needs of young people:

- A. An exploration of the history of the YMCA movement as a way of contextualising the need for research into the spirituality of young people in an organisational setting. This has highlighted the YMCA Christian basis and the challenge for inclusivity.
- B. Analysis of the YMCA's current response to the spiritual needs of young people. In this paper, I argue that existing practices require further examination.
- C. I have collated a range of definitions of spirituality and categorised them as secular, generally religious or specifically religious to inform the YMCA's approach and to protect the diverse nature and variability in the concept of spirituality.

- D. I have entered into dialogue with other researchers to build understanding of existing literature written on the subject. The main findings provide a challenge to the long held view that young people are spiritual seekers. However, I also consider other perspectives and in particular one that supports the idea that spirituality is biologically driven.
- E. From my analysis of key texts, I have identified a model using my own methodology of Drivers and Corollaries; which can be tested out in field research in the YMCA to help Young People to explore the concept of spirituality.
- F. I have begun the process of research which could challenge or reinforce the call to establish the first YMCA Spirituality Centre for young people.

The first four activities have been delivered within this paper. The fourth activity of identifying ways in which the YMCA can help young people to explore the concept of spirituality has been started in this paper and will be completed through field work. The design and integration of a YMCA Centre for the Study of Spirituality will be informed by the results of the field work and this part of the project is a response to the call for YMCAs across England to become involved in shaping the English Movement's strategic approach of ensuring that "Christian Spirituality continues to form a fundamental part of the makeup or 'DNA' of the Movement". The Centre, if justified and realised through this research, would provide a place where the Movement's own heritage in spirituality can be recorded, explored and developed by young people.

### **iii) Introduction and Motivation**

The YMCA movement is a federated group of Christian Faith-based charitable organisations. The YMCA movement's purpose is to help young people to achieve their potential in life through the holistic development of their bodies, minds and souls. It would appear that the YMCA has a history of success in helping young people to develop their bodies and minds through the provision of

appropriate services. It is also true that many local YMCAs have provided for spiritual development. However, given the Christian Faith-based nature of the YMCA, much of this has been focussed on the Christianity with limited success in accommodating the needs of those of other faiths or of no faith.

Even with a slightly negative opening remark, it must be noted that the YMCA is committed to improving its response to the spiritual needs of young people. On 14<sup>th</sup> January 2008, key stakeholders from YMCA associations across the country met in London to begin to review work on the draft National Strategy for Christian Development. The establishment of a YMCA Spirituality Centre for Young People has been identified as an important contribution to the Regional and National Strategic Plan.

From my initial assessment through discussions with staff and young people, I am of the view that there may be at least three factors causing a crisis of spirituality in the YMCA movement.

Firstly, the YMCA National Secretary suggested in January 2008 that a lack of attention to the subject at a strategic level in the YMCA has caused it to lose priority of importance in the 'to do list' of some YMCA associations. The design and integration of a YMCA Centre for the Study of Spirituality with young people is a response to the call for YMCAs across England to become involved in shaping the English Movement's strategic approach, i.e. of ensuring that "Christian Spirituality continues to form a fundamental part of the makeup or 'DNA' of the Movement".

The need for this work has been identified at a national level within the YMCA movement. In a recent letter, the National Secretary wrote: "The Movement has requested that YMCA England looks to develop a Christian Spiritual Development strategy to ensure that this is as important to the

YMCA as our DNA is to human life. We want a strategy that will ensure that a Christian Spiritual Development is evident in all that we do.” (Sarkis, 2008. Open Letter).

Secondly, the structural nature of the YMCA movement means that whilst each local YMCA association is subject to a shared common set of Articles and Objects, it is still sufficiently autonomous to deliver different interpretations of how best to engage with young people. Local variations in how YMCA associations operate have resulted in a variety of responses to the spiritual needs of young people, ranging from very limited provision through to sizeable Faith-based projects.

A third reason, is found in local responses to changes in legislation and regulation. For example, Equal Opportunities Legislation has resulted in local associations making sure that young people from different or no faith backgrounds are welcomed in to the services offered locally. However, it may have been difficult for some associations to find theologically meaningful strategies to address the perceived conflicts that arise when a faith-based organisation obtains public money to deliver services which are accessed by those of other or no faith. From my discussions with staff from different YMCAs, I am of the view that many different approaches have been adopted.

## **1. A Proposed Activity Plan**

On a practical level, the YMCA could identify aspects of Christian practice that are understood and promoted by local associations. I am also of the opinion that young people and staff in the YMCA need to bring out the fullness of what it means to be a Christian-based organisation in contemporary society. I suggest that there are six activities that will help the YMCA to improve its ability to cater for the spiritual needs of young people:



- A. To briefly explore the history of the YMCA movement as a way of contextualising the need for research into the spirituality of young people in an organisational setting.
- B. To identify the YMCA's current response to the spiritual needs of young people
- C. To protect the diverse nature and variable concept of spirituality in a categorisation of definitions.
- D. To enter into dialogue with other researchers to build understanding of existing literature written on the subject.
- E. To identify models or methodologies so that the YMCA can help young people to explore the concept of spirituality.
- F. To establish the first YMCA Spirituality Centre for young people.

The intention is for the centre to provide a place where the Movement's own heritage in spirituality can be recorded, explored and developed to ensure that the Movement is able to serve the spiritual needs of the young people it serves from a position of knowledge, empathy and strength. It is my intention for the Professional Doctorate to inform the process of developing the YMCA's response to the spiritual needs of young people.

As prescribed in the first action point, one needs to consider a brief history of the YMCA and its Christian roots to assist in building a comprehensive understanding of the significance and importance of spirituality in the YMCA and how it chooses to respond to the spiritual needs of young people.

## **2. A Brief History of the YMCA movement and its Christian basis**

It has been difficult to locate many original sources for this historical survey. During the Second World War, much of the YMCA's historical archive was lost in the London Blitz. Surviving information is contained in secondary sources within a small number of books and pamphlets, although the University of Birmingham is building up an archive for YMCA England.

The 'Young Men's Christian Association' was founded in London in response to unhealthy living conditions arising in the big cities at the end of the Industrial Revolution. The growth of the railways and industrialisation brought many rural young men in need of jobs to London. They worked around 10 to 12 hours a day, six days a week. Far from home and family, these young men often lived within the workplace. They slept crowded into rooms above street level shops because these locations were thought to be safer than London's tenements and streets. In the YMCA England's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Review Paper, a quotation from a shop assistant at the time gives an insight into the effects of London city life on young men. He said "No class was more degraded and dissolute; none were sunk deeper in ungodliness and dissipation, than the shop men of London".

The driving force behind the early YMCA movement is widely accepted as George Williams. During June and early July 1844, a series of discussions took place in rooms above Hitchcock and Roger's Drapers shop in St Paul's Churchyard, London. George Williams, Christopher Smith, Edward Valentine, John Symons and others discussed setting up what quickly became known as The Young Men's Christian Association. (Shedd, 1955. page 23).

## **2.1 A Blossoming of the Movement**

As the YMCA movement gained momentum, independent local associations began to appear in a number of towns. Following the work of the London Association during the Great Exhibition of 1851, the Movement spread to Australia, France, India and North America. As stated by Shedd in his 1955 book, *History of the World Alliance of Young Men's Christian Associations* It was to be “evangelistic, ecumenical in spirit and membership, and to be concerned with improving social conditions and promoting learning. Central to this was the duty of Christian young men to witness in practical ways to their Faith in the sphere of their daily life.” (Shedd. 1955, p. 39).

The YMCA's application of the Gospel is rooted in the Paris Basis as agreed at the First World Conference in 1855, but it was updated and confirmed at the 6<sup>th</sup> World Conference in 1973, in a document entitled 'The Kampala Principles'. The Paris Basis was further refined and confirmed by the Challenge 21 Statement of Mission and was adopted in 1998 by the World Alliance of YMCAs, at the 14th World Council. It affirms the ongoing foundation statement of the mission of the YMCA:

“At the threshold of the third millennium, we declare that the YMCA is a world-wide Christian, ecumenical, voluntary movement for women and men with special emphasis on and the genuine involvement of young people and that it seeks to share the Christian ideal of building a human community of justice with love, peace and reconciliation for the fullness of life for all creation.”

## **2.2 Responding to Need in Contemporary Local YMCAs**

The YMCA is a well known brand, but one that is often identified with a stereotypical image of young men living in hostels, playing basketball, racquetball or some other sport, and never being very far from a television, lounge or canteen. However, the reality in most cases is very different. Over time, cultural integration, societal changes and legislation have meant that the YMCA movement has had

to develop and change to become more inclusive in serving the particular and contemporary needs of young people.

As the needs of young people have changed over time, those within YMCAs all over the world have chosen to work for social justice irrespective of religion, race, gender or cultural background. In addition, increasing numbers of YMCAs have become engaged in inter-religious dialogue and partnerships.

The YMCA's focus on the overall health of young people has always been focussed on a three-way tension between Body, Mind and Soul. In the increasingly secularised societies and widening gaps between the wealthiest and poorest, the tendency has been towards addressing health, intellectual and skills development for the purposes of increasing economic worth and influence. The YMCA movement has surely been influenced to some degree by this trend. In many respects, this literature review is in recognition of this state. It is focussed on taking cognisance of the range of exceptional work undertaken by YMCAs around England in trying to achieve a balance between the three aspects of Body, Mind and Soul - in keeping with Pauline Anthropology.

### **3. Spirituality in the YMCA – Towards a Focus on Spiritual Development**

In today's world, the concept of providing pastoral care for 21,000 young people each week in England is a challenging one. Not only is that group as diverse as the wider population, but the staff and volunteers serving them also come from every part of society and differing communities. This is the context in which spirituality has to be addressed.

The contemporary nature of Christian practice in local associations may be described as varied, but this has yet to be surveyed. On a national level, there is participation in the Connect Project hosted by the Frontier Youth Trust and Church Army. There is also a participation in Greenbelt, the Annual National Assembly and the World Council gatherings (YMCA England Website, 2007).

#### **3.1 Identifying the Current Nature of Spirituality in the YMCA**

At the time of writing, no comprehensive research had been undertaken into the nature of spirituality in the YMCA. What I have identified through discussion with staff from different associations, is that where attention is given to spirituality it is mostly Christian in nature with little accommodation for other faiths. Whilst this is in keeping with the focus of the movement, it will not address the needs of those of no faith or of other faiths. More worrying, are the anecdotal accounts of individuals feeling pressured to comply with Christian worship activities in some associations. Where they fail to participate, they can feel marginalised because their spiritual needs are not being met.

This leads me to consider what the "C" stands for in the YMCA. In my view, the YMCA is obliged to identify what it accepts as legitimate Christian practice especially within the services it delivers and in the organisational culture it promotes. The YMCA's Christian position needs to be established in terms of how Christianity and inclusivity are reconciled. It would seem that a reasonable way

forward might be for the YMCA to explore where it ought to locate its practices between inclusivity

and exclusivity on the one hand, and diversity and uniformity on the other. In this respect, the theological considerations are not much different from those that might be debated in a contemporary church setting.

This leads me on to consider the third task of protecting the diverse nature and variability in the concept of spirituality. The next section will attempt to produce a degree of substance to this task by providing a broad, inclusive method for the categorisation of definitions of spirituality.

### **3.2 A Broad Categorisation of Definitions**

The following section represents my first task of collating a range of definitions of spirituality in the form of a broad categorisation. The intention is to present a cross section of definitions within a set of categories. There are many thousands of definitions of spirituality to be found in libraries and on the World Wide Web. However, to do each justice would take more space than can be provided in this literature review. This fact, together with the difficulty of reaching one universal definition, has led me to take a random selection of the definitions from other writers and categorise them according to which community has ownership of the definition, namely: the secular, broadly religious and specifically religious, e.g. a Christian definition.

#### **3.2.1 Examples of secular definitions include:**

a) “An inner sense of something greater than oneself. Recognition of a meaning to existence that transcends one's immediate circumstances” (Online Nature Journal Issue 19, 1997).

b) “A sense of meaning and purpose, a sense of self and of relationship with 'that which is greater than self', and also practices such as meditation and 'bonding rituals' which support such identity and relationship; expressed in organisations in issues such as 'belonging'" (Tetradian Website, 2007).

Tetradian is a strategy consultancy that acknowledges spirituality in the context of the work environment.

**3.2.2 For those groups and individuals for whom religious observance is relevant without reference to a faith group or denomination, the following broadly religious definitions might be meaningful:**

c) “Having to do with deep, often religious, feelings and beliefs, including a person’s sense of peace, purpose, connection to others and beliefs”

(Jenkins in Anderson’s Website, 2007). Jenkins works for Anderson's Department of Chaplaincy, a cancer research charity.

These definitions correlate with the views of some young people in the YMCA who, in casual discussion in 2006, referred to spirituality as the sense of belonging to their group and of things being joined together.

### **3.2.3 Christian Spirituality can be defined as:**

d) The Roman Catholic order in Bordeaux describes spirituality as “A specific way of living aspects of the Gospel” (Holy Family of Bordeaux Website, 1997).

e) Michael Downey, Associate Professor of Theology (1997, p. 33) describes human beings as: “spirit in the world understood as a unity, a whole, rather than as a hybrid of competing parts”. The spiritual dimension of the person is described as the ability that human beings possess which enables them “to transcend or break out of self isolation, self preoccupation and self absorption, and then being drawn to the unfathomable mystery called God”.

I refer to these particular Christian definitions because they demonstrate two different ends of the spectrum. The first is very easy to read and the second is more theological in nature. The first comes out of the practical application of the Gospel in a way that is important for the YMCA. The second, gives a response hewn out of much reflection. As such, it provides more ground for debate at a strategic level.



## **4. Dialogue with Selected Key Authorities on the Spirituality of Young People**

### **4.1 Key Voices for the Spirituality of Young People**

It is necessary, given that this professional doctorate is concerned with the spiritual practices in an organisational setting, to work towards an understanding of spirituality in the context of the YMCA organisation, its staff and its clients. The broad definitions in the previous section are a useful starting point on the journey towards achieving a refined model or method of engaging the whole organisation in a meaningful dialogue about its spiritual locus. However, they do not in themselves deliver the fertile garden in which young people can cultivate their ideas about the world and spirituality. This requires a different approach. To help I have chosen to discuss the work of two groups of researchers who have recently worked with young people in an attempt to understand their spirituality. This dialogue will help me to move closer to a workable model for engaging an organisation in a dialogue about spirituality with young people.

The anchor work is that of Sara Savage, Sylvia Collins-Mayo, Bob Mayo and Graham Cray in their 2006 book entitled *"Making Sense of Generation Y. The World View of 15 – 25 year olds"*. Their research has thrown up a powerful challenge to the widely accepted church view that young people are spiritual seekers. However, I wish to examine some of their assumptions and conclusions in the light of my other readings.

The second group of researchers are Michael Mason, Andrew Singleton and Ruth Webber who undertook similar research to that of Savage, Collins-Mayo, Mayo and Cray, but with a larger group in Australia. In 2007 they published *"The Spirit of Generation Y"*. In many respects their initial conclusions are very similar to those of Savage et al and support the overall findings. There are however, subtle differences in the language used to interpret their findings and this has enriched my understanding. These two groups of researchers act as valuable discussion partners on my journey towards an increased understanding of young people's spirituality.

In addition I will also identify relevance in the work of David Hay and Rebecca Nye, who in 1998, wrote *"The Spirit of the Child"*. Whilst this book was written about children and not young people it does, in my view, provide additional valuable insights into the early formative years in a young person's life.

The fourth book that I want to briefly draw on is Gordon Lynch's introduction to progressive belief in the twenty first century, entitled *"The New Spirituality"*, which gives a few pointers that resonate with the other writers. His insights provide an element of context from an environment external to contemporary research around young people.

#### **4.2 The Thematic Trends Identified in the Key Voices.**

To begin with, it is noteworthy that both Savage et al and Mason et al came to the same conclusion that young people are not, in the main, automatically looking for a deeper experience or the god beyond themselves. Instead, most young people are living the here and now in a world that they consider to be "basically OK" (Savage et al. 2006, p. 48), where "the thing is to enjoy life and make the best of it here and now" (Mason et al. 2007, p. 264).

It may be argued that the research conducted by Savage et al emphasised the majority view of a group of relatively well off young people living relatively comfortably in an economic environment that was at the height of its growth cycle. This is arguable because the group in the research represent a generation for which household net wealth in the UK has more than doubled in real terms between 1987 and 2006 (Office for National Statistics Website 2008). Savage et al state (2006, p. 8) that "these young people have enough money to consume and participate in popular arts and

culture". The researchers argue further that "these included young people" have sometimes been "neglected" "in favour of the more marginal, excluded and problematic young people" and so provide a "barometer of wider society". This very reasoning then excludes, from the research, the marginal groups of young people who are so significant in the work of the YMCA. The research has not effectively addressed the other groups of young people who are not as secure as the research group. This is an important point because the YMCA focuses on those young people who do not live the "happy midi-narrative", who have fallen out of relationships with their families and friends, who are engaged in crime and substance misuse or who are failing in education and employment.

I do accept the position taken by Hay and Nye (1998, p.16) that oppressed, poorer people are less likely to speak of spirituality than those better off because of the psychological damage incurred in a socially unjust system. However, not only does the YMCA work with disenfranchised young people in society, but it does so by creating an environment or space in time to enable oppressed young people to find respite so that they can speak out from places of safety. It is my view that the group of young people within the YMCA are exactly those that the young interviewees in Savage et al refer to as "sad and pathetic" (2006, p. 48). It is that disassociated group with whom little or no research has been conducted around spirituality.

However, Savage et al express the view that this happy midi narrative is false and is there to be challenged through careful and considered engagement. Of concern, is the possibility that adherence to the "the happy midi-narrative" is more about despondency, powerlessness and complacency than anything else. The research in the United Kingdom, also identified reluctance among young people to even consider the possibility of failing to live the "the happy midi-narrative" life. This "silent depressed" (2006, p. 48) view of the world, which is not spoken of openly, is according to Savage et al an undercurrent that symbolises failure to be happy. Together with evidence of a high suicide rate amongst young people (Sutton et al. 2005, p. 5-6) this finding suggests that for some young people the "happy midi-narrative" is not so happy after all.

Savage et al and Mason et al also identified a lack of interest amongst young people in seeking transformative spiritual experiences. Young people were clear about not wanting to actively participate in traditional religious activities. However, in the research young people appeared to demonstrate what I term *legacy spirituality* i.e. holding a remnant of religious observance or belief from previous generations. They would attend cradle to grave ceremonies in churches because that's what the family did. Mason et al quote Andre Charron (2007, p. 53) who refers to a process of "distanciation" in which people become progressively detached from religious life in a pattern of "progressive unbelief and religious alienation", the end of which is apathy and loss of desire to consider anything religious or spiritual. The research presented in England and Australia confirms that many young people are now "distanciated" and are unable or unwilling to engage in dialogue around spiritual matters. Hay and Nye (1998, p. 50) refer to Taminnen's "declining reports of spiritual activity" amongst children as being indicative of the "blotting out of spirituality as a socially constructed phenomenon". In their view, the progressively younger ages at which children are being educated in the "scientific tradition of the enlightenment with its associated religious scepticism" is at least part of the cause of this distanciation. Another reason for this phenomenon is found in Mason et al (2007, p. 60 – 61) who refer to Luckmann's suggestion that the multiplicity of world views held today means that it is now impossible to support a single model in creating an overarching cosmos. This, in Luckmann's view, reduces the likelihood of young adolescents being able to hold onto traditional spiritual beliefs.

Savage et al (2006, p. 48) make the link to the rise in teenage suicides as being associated with this depressed dimension in the world view. Sutton et al in their report for the Robert Gordon University in Aberdeen titled "The Emotional Well Being of Young People" (1995, p.5-8), notes the link between well being, suicide and self harming amongst young people. These and other negative aspects of life

experience bring young people into contact with the YMCA and yet they also appear to be unaccounted for in the research undertaken by Savage et al and Mason et al.

Furthermore, the link between mental health and faith activities has been established in a number of contexts. For example Tuck, McCain and Elswick (2001) have confirmed a positive link between “psychosocial well being, as determined by social interactions, coping, stress levels and spirituality”. Whilst this study was conducted in a clinical setting it is possible to take the view that the same correlation exists in the social interactions and spirituality of young people. I suggest that the “silent depressed” (2006, p. 48) view of the world, which is not spoken of openly by young people represents the world view of a high proportion who access the contemporary YMCA. If this is shown to be true in my later research, then it will be imperative for the YMCA to find a means, model or methodology through which to engage these young people in dialogue about spirituality. Savage et al and Mason et al use the findings of their research to recommend “incarnational church planting” (Savage et al: 2006, p.160) where individuals embody the Gospel through engagement with young people. Mason et al put it slightly differently, suggesting that successful church is about “ministering alongside” rather than “ministering from in front” (2007, p. 340) or as I would explain it – ministering from above.

I have followed the core hypotheses of my chosen key texts, which if condensed simplistically, suggest that young people believe that they are mainly happy with their lot in life providing they do not fail to live the “happy midi-narrative”. Before briefly considering the implications of this statement for the YMCA in the next section, I wish to highlight Alister Hardy’s view on the biology of spirituality as summarised in Hay and Nye (1998, p. 9–10). Hardy argues that: “spirituality is rooted in something as concrete as breathing or eating or seeing; that is to say, it is biologically natural to the species *Homo sapiens*”. Hardy, a zoologist, was the first to put this statement explicitly to the world and there are still many researchers and scientists who hold to this understanding. If

admissible, then this perspective reinforces the idea that rather than young people being aspiritual (that is being of the first generations to 'grow up' and leave the old traditional religiously motivated world views behind) they are in fact of the first generations to have their biologically driven spiritually pushed out by secular consumerism.

#### **4.3 Implications for the YMCA**

Both research groups suggest that ministry needs to engage the arts, media and technology in creative ways. From the perspective of the future of the YMCA's work with young people, these conclusions are all very helpful but I would make two points.

Firstly, I am of the view that the YMCA's nature demands that it already has a diversity of young people within its 'city walls' engaging in specialist services that I would consider to be incarnationally driven. Put differently, the YMCA is already an incarnational organisation. Many young people use the YMCA as a place of comfort and sanctuary where they receive the help they require. For example, each week in England there are 23,000 young people living in YMCA accommodation. Many of those would otherwise be homeless.

A second point is that from my experience of delivering services in the YMCA, it would appear that a large proportion of our young clients would not consider themselves to be Christian, but may well carry some of the *legacy spirituality* which I defined earlier. Many arrive at the YMCA in urgent need of support for the most basic of the human needs like shelter, food and warmth. The challenge therefore is for the YMCA, in keeping with Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Evans, 1990. p. 91), to meet their physiological needs whilst attending to the social, mental and spiritual ones which often follow.

Presumably due to the constraints of word space, neither the English nor the Australian research provides sufficient detail upon which to build a model for engaging young people in dialogue about their spirituality. A significant proportion of the YMCA's client group are the young people who hold a silently depressed view of the world. I would like to hypothesise that many in this 'down and out' group of clients try in desperation to find spiritual meaning in their times of need and whilst this type of behaviour is only touched on lightly in Savage et al and Mason et al, it is nevertheless in keeping with Hardy's hypothesis. In the next section of this paper, I will define a model and methodology that I believe will enable the YMCA to explore this aspect with its client group.

## **5. Defining Spirituality in terms of Drivers and Corollaries**

This section represents initial work in my task of producing a model of spirituality for testing in the YMCA context. It may be recalled from the previous section that I tasked myself with designing a conceptual model for spirituality which is a systematic, yet reflexive means of enabling individuals to define their spirituality out of their life experiences and world view.

If the concept of personal spirituality is valid, then it makes sense to locate references to it in the definitions of other writers. There are at least four broad categories into which definitions of spirituality might fall. My hypothesis is that each of the four categories has two elements: a driver and corollary. I suggest that the drivers are defined by the person's upbringing, life experiences, expectations and worldview. They may be dependent on the context of the language, aims and motivation of the individual. The corollaries are the resultant implications located within the definition. They are the expressions used by the individual to communicate their understanding of how their spirituality functions in every day life. The four categories are not mutually exclusive and there may be areas of crossover between them. Under the four categories, the drivers and corollaries could be: *Journey and Change*, *Experience and Reflection*, *Relationship and Community*, *Narratives and Meaning*.

## 5.1 Journey and Change

For the category of *Journey and Change*, individuals use journey as the driver, possibly out of the need to express their spirituality as distance travelled or things changed. People who speak of their spiritual journey expect to arrive in a different place having changed location. The corollary then is change as a result of their spiritual journey.

Bernard Joseph Francis Lonergan (1904-1984), a Jesuit priest (1972, p. 11), refers to spirituality as “going over, transcending or climbing over to a new place.” “Climbing over” might suggest barriers to progress, which have to be overcome en route to a new level of understanding. To this idea, one can add Philip H. Phenix’s definition (1964, p. 118), where he states that “Spirituality has the property of timeless going beyond.” Perhaps his experiences as an educational philosopher enable him to identify with the concept of education being a process of going beyond existing knowledge. This definition also invokes thoughts of the otherness of the destination. At the start of the journey one is located in time; upon arrival at the destination, timelessness takes over. It is another dimension in the same way that a paradigm shift is achieved through learning a significant new thing. From a different perspective, this definition can also refer to the continuous or ongoing desire to go beyond one’s current situation.

B. J. Cann a researcher in the Palliative Cancer Care Research Unit in Manitoba, Canada (1986, p.3) refers to the individual’s capacity for transcendence, an implication that the spiritual journey is internal where progress is not easily witnessed from outside the consciousness of the individual. Canon John Macquarrie, a Scottish-born Presbyterian theologian turned Anglican, reinforces Cann’s implication of loneliness on the journey. His definition is that spirituality is the person’s journey towards becoming a person in the fullest sense (1972, p.15).



In my view, the *Journey and Change* set can easily result in a definition that is weighted too heavily towards the individual on their own separate journey. Whilst this is true to a degree, the bigger reality is that for many young people in the YMCA their description of their spiritual journey is very much more that of the community or group in transit. It is the idea of the migrant family travelling from here to there and learning about different experiences together through a common language. So, with a little more expansion, Cann and Macquarries' definitions can address the difficulty of the solitary journey if one accepts that in becoming a person in the fullest sense is reliant on community and communication.

## **5.2 Life Experience and Reflection**

Under this category, life experience is the driver which results in the corollary of reflection on the spiritual experience, or in the expression of what is perceived to be happening in the spiritual experience. The reflection appears to be meaningful irrespective of the significance or importance of the experience. So, on the one hand, spiritual reflection results from a *night clubbing* experience or through *the depths of sorrow through the loss of someone close*, as described by Gordon Lynch in his book: *After Religion, Generation X and the Search for Meaning*.

Lynch (2002, p.105), quotes Starkey's view that spirituality is a massive growth industry where "spirituality is on sale at a high street and shopping mall near you." Lynch describes his personal experience, and that of many young people today, as a reflection on contemporary everyday experiences and where the traditional Church with its doctrines and values is unlikely to be helpful or relevant to Generation X (that is the generation born between 1961 and 1981). He refers to the experiences of young people *going clubbing* and asks the question whether this is a spiritual experience or not. As might be predicted, some people claim a spiritual experience and some do not. For example, Louise in Lynch (2002, p.79), never saw clubbing as religious or spiritual, but as a "developmental narrative" and regarded it as valuable "experience." It was one "from which she has

Page | 273

learnt and now outgrown.” Some young people in the YMCA will identify with spirituality as reflection upon everyday experience. Many of the young people in the YMCA are there because they are seeking ways of exiting from a particular lifestyle, be that substance misuse, abuse against them or relational breakdown and homelessness. Some young people describe the learning that comes from reflecting upon their experiences and how this will alter their future decisions. Some of those reflections are, as we might expect, about the *big questions* of life.

Downey (1997, p. 42), provides a definition that appears to be almost flippant about the significance of spiritual reflection. He described the modern understanding of spirituality in the Western or Northern context as a *product* - a “means of feeling good”, an experience based on the “twelve steps” to whatever (*authors’ insertion*) methodological approach. This description of the experience is a comment on the state of spiritual experience where process has overtaken reflection. At the other end of the spectrum, William H. Becker, Professor of Religion at Bucknell University, calls spirituality the “code word for the depth dimension of human experience”. He describes it as an inexhaustible, socially constructed web of meaning” (1994, p. 251). In opposition to Downey, and using the same driver, Becker concludes that the experience of spirituality is actually a deep reservoir of meaning.

In concluding this category I wish to refer to McGrath’s definition. He is currently Professor of Historical Theology at the University of Oxford and his definition (2000, p.15) is possibly one of the most rounded within the category of life experience and reflection. He states “Spirituality concerns the fulfilled and authentic religious life, involving bringing together ideas distinctive of that religion and the whole experience of living on the basis of and within the scope of that religion.” This definition could prove valuable in the YMCA environment because it allows for a meaningful reflective group discussion to take place about life experience, but in the context of different faiths.

### 5.3 Relationships and Community

In this category, the common driver in the definition is the idea of relationship. The corollary is the community that arises out of relationships.

Some authors such as B. K. Myers argue that it is the interrelationships and interactions between people and communities that drive spiritual experience. Myers (1997, p. 24), claims that “voices from the margins increasingly speak of a god who is not all powerful. These voices raise the question of justice and in the process; redefine this god as having more to do with relatedness than absolutes.” Myers is of the view that the absolute is no more, that the relationship between the person and their environment in its broadest sense including community, is what defines the relationship with the god figure. Perhaps then for some young people, the god figure is a transient image because of the transient nature of their relationships with peers and because of the transient nature of their communities.

There are other writers who locate their definitions of spirituality firmly in the context of relationship and community. Margaret Chatterjee has taught at Calgary, Oxford, Jerusalem and Delhi Universities, and her definition is direct and concise: “No spirituality is shorn of community” (1989, p. 80). So irrespective of its nature, the community is still an essential component in formulating spirituality. It may be that for many young people, the perceived transient nature of the god figure is closely tied in with a lack of knowledge and trust in that god figure. Perhaps this partly explains the lack of conscious choices to partake in transformative spirituality as described in the research of Sara Savage et al. (2006, p. 45). They describe how their research identified that whilst young people rarely spoke about God and the transcendent realm, they are not mere material hedonists.” They go on to explain that to young people, “life is an ultimate value.” Their research is a quest to identify where the community of relationships may be found for Generation Y (young people born after 1981) if the Church is no longer seen as the “source of transformative spirituality” (2006, p. 13). I am

of the opinion that the YMCA will be able to offer one such community of relationships providing it finds ways of being inclusive within its Christian practices. Lynch (2002, p. 105), describes Generation X as being addicted to consumerist spirituality which implies intergenerational cross-contamination so that Generation Y might be inheriting the same consumerist approach from Generation X. The challenge then, is whether Generation Y can rebel and seek more of the transformative spirituality so vacant in the previous generation. In such a highly constructed society, there are few opportunities left for young people to participate in the adventurous, the unknown and for them to express the pioneering spirit. The YMCA may well be able to provide some of these opportunities as it devolves real power, authority and ownership to young people.

#### **5.4 Narratives and Meaning.**

In this final category, the driver is an individual's intention to tell a story, usually all or part of their life story, to find meaning (the corollary) and to help others understand the world from their perspective.

An example would be Pattison and Lynch's (2005, p. 418) suggestion that the "theologian's personal spirituality" and life story are "in pursuit of the authentic relationship with the truth as revealed within the Christian tradition". They quote Nouwen and Oden as proponents of this type of approach. Both moved from an engagement with the human sciences towards placing a greater emphasis on Christian tradition as the medium through which they find meaning in their life stories and those of others.

However, there is also a strong interrelationship between this category and those of Life Experience and Reflection. In particular, Lynch presents research with clubbers; for example, Tanya's experience of clubbing as recorded in Harrison's *High Society* (2002, p. 75). In her narrative, she reflects upon a

clubbing experience where “natural love, bubbling up for others allowed her to lose her mistrust of strangers”, thereby permanently changing her outlook. Young people in the YMCA have a great opportunity to share their world with other generations, but this will only happen if young people are given opportunities to record their stories, to reflect upon them and to communicate them. The YMCA needs to acknowledge that there is a strong motivation in this category of spirituality for developing intergenerational projects to help break down barriers between communities.

## 6. Conclusion

In grappling with the issues around how the YMCA could better meet the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society, I have identified some key tasks in this paper:

- A. In briefly exploring the history of the YMCA movement as a way of contextualising the need for research into the spirituality of young people in an organisational setting, I have identified the Christian basis and the need for inclusivity.
- B. By identifying the YMCA's current response to the spiritual needs of young people, I have shown that existing practices require examination.
- C. I have delivered a broad categorisation of definitions for spirituality to demonstrate that it is possible to do so in an inclusive manner. Within this Literature review, I have collated a range of definitions of spirituality and categorised them as secular, generally religious or specifically religious to inform the YMCA's approach.
- D. Using two key research projects, I have entered into dialogue with other researchers to build an understanding of young people's spirituality.
- E. From my analysis of these key texts I have identified a model and methodology using my own methodology of *Drivers and Corollaries*; which can be tested through field research in the YMCA to help Young People to explore the concept of spirituality.

The findings of this field work will either challenge or reinforce the intention to establish the first YMCA Spirituality Centre for Young People.

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## APPENDIX TWO: PUBLISHABLE PAPER

MEETING THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YMCA  
TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH.

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SID 0717067

JULY 2009

**STAGE ONE: PUBLISHABLE PAPER**

**SEEKING THE 'C' IN THE 'Y'**

**DISCERNING CHRISTIAN PRACTICE IN THE YMCA**

This research programme was carried out in collaboration with  
the Cambridge Theological Federation

***"I believe in humanity's future. If I had kept an innocent Faith in God, I would probably pray for the salvation of this world where children are the first to suffer. The child will have the leading role in man's spiritual renewal - it was my intention to play some part in it."***

Quotation from **Janusz Korczak** (born **Henryk Goldsmit**)

Polish Holocaust Victim, Doctor and Children's Rights Champion

1936

## i) Contents

ii) LIST OF FIGURES .....	287
iii) LIST OF TABLES .....	287
iv) ABSTRACT .....	288
<b>1.Introduction</b> .....	290
<b>2.The Research, its Design and Methodology</b> .....	294
a.Initial Considerations.....	294
b.The Research Paradigm.....	295
c.The Research Approach.....	296
d.The Research Methodology .....	297
e.The Interview Design.....	300
f.Design of the Communication Process .....	300
g.Ethical Considerations.....	301
<b>3.The Findings of the Research with Stakeholders in Chantry YMCA303</b>	
a.Locus.....	304
b.Spirituality .....	305
c.Christian basis.....	19
d.Inclusion .....	313
e.General Comments .....	313
<b>4.Possibilities and Probabilities Arising from the Research</b> .....	316
<b>5.Conclusions</b> .....	322
<b>6.Bibliography</b> .....	324

## **ii) LIST OF FIGURES**

## **Page**

Figure One – The Three Stage Research Design.

10

## **iii) LIST OF TABLES**

## **Page**

Table One - The Range of YMCAs in Terms of Size, Services and Subjects

11

Table Two – Describing the Christian basis of Chantry YMCA

21

## **iv) ABSTRACT**

### **MEETING THE SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE YMCA**

#### **TOWARDS A CONTEMPORARY APPROACH.**

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JULY 2009

STAGE ONE: PUBLISHABLE PAPER

### **SEEKING THE 'C' IN THE 'Y'**

#### **DISCERNING CHRISTIAN PRACTICE IN THE YMCA**

This paper provides a snap shot of one YMCA Association's corporate view of spirituality, its Christian basis and inclusivity. My research provides plausible statements about the possibilities and probabilities highlighted by this work. In preparation I have found this initial pilot to be useful in creating a set of propositions for other YMCAs to consider as they work out their relationship with the Christian basis.

Through structured interviews I sought to answer the following research question:

***"Does Chantry YMCA respond effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society whilst maintaining its Christian basis?"***

The findings of the research suggests that Chantry YMCA responds inclusively and effectively to the physical and emotional needs of young people, but less so where



spiritual needs are encountered. Whilst the Christian basis can be seen to be evident textually, it is only partially discernable culturally and is therefore not visible in service delivery. Nevertheless, Chantry YMCA is attractive to young people in contemporary society and the organisation has to face the challenge of addressing the tension between this relevance and its Faith legacy. By way of defining possibilities and probabilities for consideration by other YMCA Associations the following set of six statements was identified:

Statement One: **The relationship between the Christian basis and Spirituality is complex.**

Statement Two: **Spiritual education is not proactively catered for in Chantry YMCA.**

Statement Three: **The overwhelming motivation in Chantry YMCA is care for Young People.**

Statement Four: **A Lack of spiritual education limits the delivery of well-rounded youth work.**

Statement Five: **The Christian basis Statement is not very well understood.**

Statement Six: **In Chantry YMCA, the implementation of the Christian basis creates tensions.**

## Introduction

The purpose of this research is to begin to foster a dialogue in the English YMCA's federated movement about its common Christian heritage and what that means for the YMCA's work as a Christian-based organisation in contemporary society. In particular, I begin the process by exploring the challenges faced by a local YMCA Association as it expresses its heritage through inclusive practice and spiritual activities. It is crucial here to create a new term to cover a conceptual legacy; my working taxonomic nomenclature is Faith Legacy

Organisations. Many of these organisations originated in a time of Victorian Christian and philanthropic fervour, and are now challenged to make sense of their historical *raison d'être* in a postmodern society. For example, in 1844 the YMCA was created in London by George Williams and by 1851 the YMCA, driven by the Social Gospel (Rogers and Blade, 1998: 181 - 186) had become a worldwide movement; its exponential growth was achieved by people who saw their role as key in "the proclamation of the (*Social*) Gospel for the salvation of humankind; the shelter, nurture, and spiritual fellowship" (Rogers and Blade, 1998: 181 - 186). The challenge faced by one such Faith Legacy Organisation lies in its ability to actively engage in discussion and debate about its place in a non - theocratic state such as the UK in which "religious and irreligious freedoms are protected" (Addison, 2009: 3).

The importance of this research in a Christian context is highlighted because Faith Legacy Organisations such as the YMCA appear to be experiencing some difficulty in creating meaningful relationships between their Faith basis and their client groups, whilst remaining financially viable. This has been recognised outside of the YMCA movement. For example, Stuart Goldman, Managing Editor of Fitness Business Pro (2008: 3) writing in an article

written about Faith organisations in the fitness industry believes that “the Y (the YMCA) has gotten away from its Christian roots”. He is concerned that the unique selling point of the YMCA is being *watered down* in an attempt to attract a wider client group. In the same article he proposes that “They're (the YMCA) missing opportunities by not celebrating what they have” (2008: 4).

The Faith basis of the YMCA elicits action to address the mental, physical and spiritual needs of young people. Yet the structure of the YMCA with its local autonomy and varied local responses to equalities legislation has resulted in a wide range of responses to the spiritual needs of young people. This paper is only one step in a long doctoral journey to explore what appears to be a mismatch between the overt and historical Faith-based nature of the YMCA movement and the expected delivery of wholly inclusive pastoral care concurrent with that Faith-based position.

The highest proportion of the YMCA's clients are between the ages of 13 and 25, the age group described as Generation 'Y' by Collins-Mayo, Cray, Mayo and Savage in their book “Making Sense of Generation Y”. From research they express the view that that “not many young people are involved in a great deal of spiritual searching” (2006: 23) and that “eclectic spiritual searching amongst young people is largely illusory” (2006: 136). If this is true then the YMCA has reached a crossroads. Does the YMCA choose to engage with generation Y in ways that honour the organisation's Christian legacy or does the YMCA give up on spirituality and Christian charitable objects to become a secular care organisation in accordance with the findings of Collins- Mayo et al..?

There is also another lesson from the recent history of Faith Legacy Organisations which speaks to the YMCA movement as it faces up to its dilemma. The Westminster Pastoral Foundation was founded in 1969 by Bill Kyle in Central Hall, Westminster. He envisioned it as a “church- cum-centre” offering a specialist Christian ministry of pastoral counselling (Willows and Swinton 2004: 145). Between 1978 and 1988 a gradual shift away from the pastoral took place eventually resulting in a change of premises and name which signified a break with theology, pastoral ministry and overt Christian practices. It continued to deliver a series of programmes of a distinctly secular nature very effectively, but had lost the original vision. The question for the YMCA is whether the loss of its Christian heritage is a price worth paying to enable it to pursue relevance in post modern society. Perhaps its relevance is more acutely defined by its unique Christian heritage in an age when that is becoming a scarce commodity.

My intention is to provide a snap shot of one YMCA Association’s corporate view of spirituality, its Christian basis and inclusivity. The research reported here provides “plausible statements about the possibilities and probabilities” as described by Knight in his reference to the value of small samples in small scale research (2000: 120). It creates a set of propositions for other YMCAs to consider as they work out their relationship with the Christian basis.

To guide my research, I endeavoured to answer a research question in its constituent parts.

The central research question is:

***Does Chantry YMCA respond effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society whilst maintaining its Christian basis?”***

In my view, there are four constituent parts to this question and each as listed below will be addressed in this paper:

- I. What does the YMCA determine to be spirituality and spiritual needs?
- II. Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?
- III. Does the YMCA respond inclusively?
- IV. Does the YMCA respond effectively?

The process of finding out Chantry YMCA's position on each of these questions had to be governed by a well managed research design methodology and this is what I set out in the next section.

## **The Research, its Design and Methodology**

### **a. Initial Considerations**

This pilot was concerned with organisational perspectives on spirituality, Christian basis and inclusivity in my employing YMCA. In simple terms, I wanted to find out what this YMCA, as represented by its staff, volunteers and Board think about the YMCA as a Christian-based organisation.

To begin with I used the methodology suggested by Trafford and Leshem (2008: 94) to design the research with key voices in Chantry YMCA in which I intended to identify their perspectives. Trafford and Leshem suggest that the definition of one's research paradigm is of vital importance being the 'first major choice'. In reality my research was always likely, in the first instance, to be inductive. The literature review which preceded this work identified a lack of internal YMCA material on the subject of spirituality and the movement's Christian basis. Throughout the review I could not ascertain whether this aspect of the YMCA's history was considered less important than the YMCA's practical work with young people or whether it was so important that everyone in the YMCA had simply assumed over the years that the Christian basis and spiritual education were integral to the work of the YMCA. The literature review also facilitated the construction of a theory of spirituality and this information, together with other external key voices, has enabled me to plan out a theoretical modelling tool for future research into categorisation of the range and variety of definitions of spirituality in the YMCA.

Whilst it would have been very useful to interview all voices, i.e. all the board members, senior staff, operational staff and volunteers, this would have taken more resources than there were available. Rather, I decided to employ the small scale research model. Given the resources available to undertake the pilot and information from research colleagues about the amount of time needed to process research data, it was agreed to sample between a third and half of Chantry YMCA's associated group of 26, including board members, senior staff, operational staff and volunteers. Chantry YMCA currently employs 14 staff and has 4 regular volunteers and 8 Board members. On this basis, it appears reasonable that interviews with 10 to 13 people would provide a sufficiently wide range of responses to the research questions.

The next decision was which type of data collection method to use. Two options appeared to be immediately apparent, the questionnaire and the interview. The relatively small sample size and typically low response rate for questionnaires; together with the complexity and subjective nature of the subject material, all seemed to point away from a questionnaire. This left the interview tool to consider. The decision to use a structured interview was made because it appeared to be the means which held the greatest potential for obtaining a focussed response.

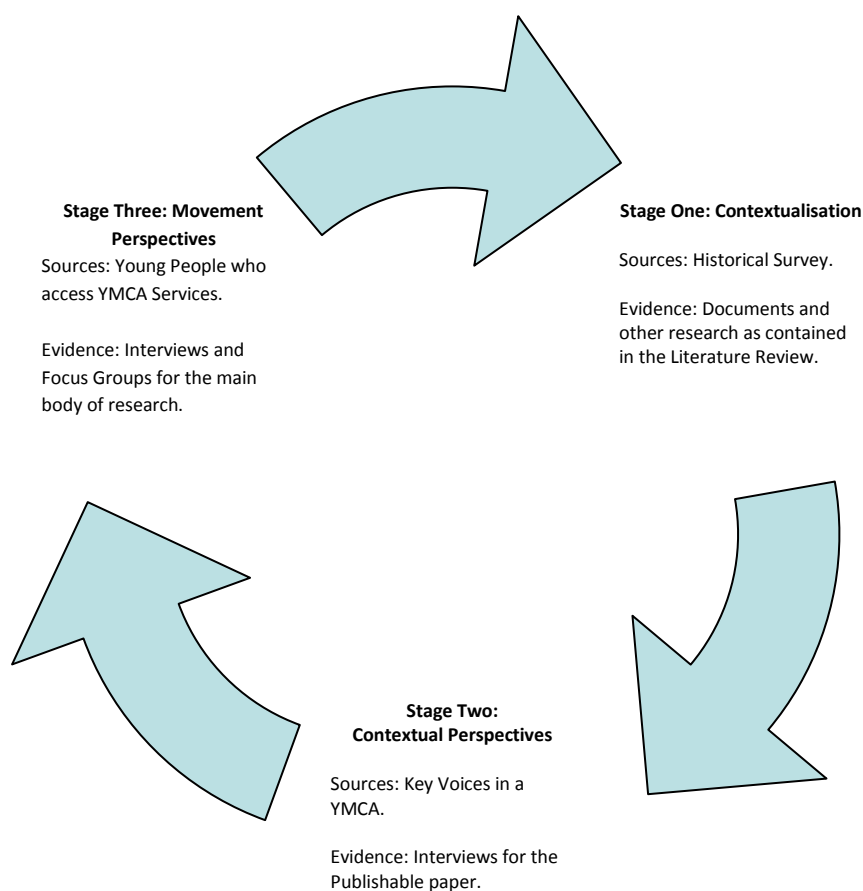
## **b. The Research Paradigm**

In keeping with the definitions from Burrell and Morgan (1979: 1-37) I was of the view that my research fell within what they have defined as the interpretative paradigm. The research subjects would be people and as key voices in the YMCA, they were active agents with free

will, purposes, goals and intentions. Each and every research subject would have in some way contributed to the health of spirituality in the YMCA by their understanding, active participation, contribution and influence; or by their lack of understanding, participation, contribution or positive influence.

### c. The Research Approach

From within the interpretative paradigm setting my research approaches were those that enabled me to deal with the variable information and contradictions that would inevitably arise from interaction with my human subjects. I opted to construct a three stage research design in keeping with Trafford and Leshem (2008: 98).



**Figure One: Three Stage Research Design**



#### d. The Research Methodology

From Figure One it can be seen that *Stage One: Contextualisation*, was covered by the Literature Review. *Stage Two: Contextual Perspectives* was intended to prepare for the research reported in this paper which is the pilot in Chantry YMCA. *Stage Three: Movement Perspectives* concerns the main body of research that will follow this pilot.

Whilst Figure One is intended to describe the whole research context in more general terms it is also necessary to focus on Stage Two as part of the preparation for entering into the main research body of the doctorate. Stage Two has enabled me to undertake a pilot study in the context of my place of work, the location where my professional practice is exercised. I have been able to capture a set of propositions from within a local YMCA Association, the smallest single legally constituted part of the YMCA movement. I am mindful of the range and diversity inherent in the YMCA movement. Figure two gives an indication of the range of variation which will need to be rationalised in the main body of research in Stage Three.

SIZE OF YMCA	CORE SERVICES	SUBJECTS
LARGE YMCA	HOUSING	BOARD MEMBERS
MEDIUM YMCA	YOUTH WORK	SENIOR STAFF
SMALL YMCA	CHILDREN'S WORK	DELIVERY STAFF
	INTERNATIONAL WORK	VOLUNTEERS
	PARENTING	
	SPORT	
	SKILLS AND EDUCATION	
	CATERING	

**Table One: The Range of YMCAs in Terms of Size, Services and Subjects**

Within my Professional Doctorate a valid unit of study in the pilot is my local association because it is from within my immediate place of work that I will be able to observe approaches to spirituality and from which I will be able to begin to form “plausible statements about the possibilities and probabilities” as described by Knight in his reference to the value of small samples in small scale research (2000: 120). He is convinced that a chosen methodology for exploration into a specific item or practice is not necessarily unreliable simply because it involves a small sample. Such a piece of small scale research, managed well, will provide invaluable insights that may well be observable elsewhere if the same methodology is subsequently used in a wider research context. This is the basis upon which I intend to observe my local YMCA Association in preparation for a wider research project.

My professional field of research is concerned with organisational perspectives on spirituality in my employing YMCA. In simple terms, I am trying to find out what this YMCA as an organisation, thinks about spirituality. Whilst it would be very useful to interview all voices (the board members, senior staff, operational staff and volunteers) this would be too expensive both in time and finance. The best compromise would be to identify representative people in the organisation who would have a sufficient range of responsibilities to know what a whole YMCA Association might be expected to do in relation to meeting spiritual needs and yet also have a good understanding of what was actually happening operationally, that is to say in practice.

The next decision that had to be made was which type of data collection method to use.

After consultation with a number of texts on the subject of designing questions for research interviews (Georges, 1980: 152, Denscombe, 1998 :120, Devellis, 1991: 63) two options appeared to be immediately apparent, the questionnaire and the interview. The relatively small sample size and typically low response rate for questionnaires together with the complexity and subjective nature of the subject material, all seemed to point away from a questionnaire. This left the interview tool to consider. The decision to use a structured interview was made because it appeared to be the means which held the greatest potential for obtaining a focussed response.

### **e. The Interview Design**

The interview was designed to last no longer than 60 minutes and contained three main sections: a briefing or introductory session, a main body of questions and followed by a summary and clarification section. Appendix One contains the question list that formed the basis of the interview.

### **f. Design of the Communication Process**

The communication process included the following ten steps:

- 1) Research Design.
- 2) Selection of Sample group.
- 3) Initial contact via emailed letter.
- 4) Follow up by telephone to secure interview.
- 5) Visit to conduct interview.
- 6) Follow up letter of thanks.
- 7) Data processing including transcription, re-checking and further clarification.
- 8) Analysis.
- 9) Research report.
- 10) Copies sent to participants.

## **g. Ethical Considerations**

The pilot study involved research with human subjects and was therefore subject to an application for ethical approval. Furthermore, this study is aimed at professionals and Board Members working in the YMCA and was concerned with the YMCA's day to day working practices. In other words, the research questions only covered the normal operational practices and did not intrude into the private lives of individuals, clients or staff. The research met the following criteria:

1. All participants in the research were over the age of 18 and were not members of any vulnerable group.
2. The procedure did not include the penetration of a participant's skin or body orifices by any substance or device.
3. A participant was not presented with painful stimuli or high intensities of auditory, visual, electrical or other stimuli.
4. A participant would not be required to undergo long periods of sleeplessness, confinement, sensory deprivation or any other form of stress.
5. There was no foreseeable risk of physical, social or psychological harm to a participant arising from the procedure.
6. There was no foreseeable invasion of privacy.
7. The experiments were designed to lead to worthwhile conclusions.
8. The applicant adhered to the procedures outlined in the "Ethics Committee Procedures for the Conduct of Research".

Having designed a reasonable process for capturing information about Chantry YMCA's approach to the central research question it remained to be implemented. The interviews were conducted over a period of four weeks using a questionnaire led interview process. The interviews were recorded in writing as well as electronically. The electronic recordings were transcribed and the texts collated against the questions. This information was then analysed to provide the themes presented in this paper.

In planning the research the interviewer was acutely aware of the inherent potential in his role as a senior staff member to create a bias in the interviews. Staff might feel that they could not answer questions in an honest and open way because of the staff seniority of the interviewer. To counter this every effort was made by the interviewer to build up the interviewee's confidence in the briefings and discussions prior to the interviews. The next section describes the information obtained from the interviews.

## **The Findings of the Research with Stakeholders in Chantry YMCA**

The interviews contained five sections:- Locus, Spirituality, Christian basis, Inclusivity and General Comments. These were designed to cover four sub questions that were provided in the introductory section of this paper:

- I. What does the YMCA determine to be Spirituality and Spiritual needs?
- II. Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?
- III. Does the YMCA respond Inclusively?
- IV. Does the YMCA respond Effectively?

The locus and general sections were vital in setting candidates at ease and in giving them opportunities to reflect on the interview and to add any additional information. The three main interview sections for spirituality, Christian basis and inclusivity enabled me to obtain information to begin to answer the first three sub-questions and the fourth on effectiveness was answered through further analysis.

## **h. Locus**

In this section, interviewees were able to contextualise their relationship with Chantry YMCA. One third of the interviewees were senior staff or Board members. One third were Coordinators and Supervisors and the remaining third were operational staff and volunteers. The design of the research ensured that within the group of interviewees there was sufficient depth of knowledge of the range of responsibilities for the YMCA Association to describe the work of the YMCA. It also meant that a composite could be drawn out to describe the Association's approach to spirituality and the Christian basis.

Responses were categorised into four categories: Children and Young People, Philanthropy, Christianity and Other. Interviewees were asked about their motivations in working in the YMCA and their reasons for wanting to do so. By far the most common motivation was to work with children and young people and a desire to make a difference for them. Only one respondent made reference to Christianity as the motivating factor. When asked what attracted them to their role, a wide range of responses were recorded. Whilst people arrived at their vocational destination in Chantry YMCA having taken many different routes, the predominant attraction was to work with young people and to act philanthropically. The most common aspect of the work liked by the interviewees was being able to give back something (philanthropy). The least liked aspects were varied and seemed to relate to roles in the organisation. Those working with young people suggested excessive paperwork and stress, whereas Board Members felt that a lack of resources and a lack of 'hands on' approach made the role less enjoyable. One interviewee's perception was that having to compromise the Christian basis in funding bids was a source of frustration.



## **i. Spirituality**

Interviewees were asked to respond with their own definitions on hearing the word “spirituality”. Each separate response statement was recorded and categorised in one of four categories: Otherness, Faith-based, Community and Personhood and ‘Don’t Know’. Twelve of the Twenty-eight response statements related to community and personhood. Ten response statements were Faith-based, four related to otherness and two respondents said they ‘didn’t know’. The high proportion of responses in community and personhood category correlated with the key motivation for being involved in the YMCA, namely to work with children and young people; and to change communities.

Using an adapted version of Pimlott’s “Words Associated with Spirituality” (1995: 5) as a prompt, the interviewees were asked to define spirituality in their own words. There were forty-six individual responses overall. The collation of this section’s results was based on where there was agreement between two or more respondents for a particular word. There were 25 responses with two or more in agreement. On this basis the responses against Pimlott’s list appeared to fall into two groups, the first and most frequent response (13 out of 25) was to relate spirituality to God, Holy Spirit, meditation and prayer. The second group was only slightly less well represented (12 out of 25) and included worship, quiet times, mystery, searching peace and awareness of others.

When asked to describe their understanding of the relationship between people and spirituality the single most frequent response (7 out of 12) was that people would seek spiritual guidance in life changing circumstances. To a lesser degree interviewees also

suggested that being spiritual is a choice. None of the interviewees felt inclined to suggest that people were not spiritual or that people no longer had an inclination to be spiritual. Where individuals opted to elaborate further, their responses included comments that spirituality is a lifestyle choice, a mix of things, a relationship with God and that not all people are spiritual or know that they are.

The interviews also explored the relationship between Chantry YMCA and spirituality. The general consensus was that Chantry YMCA does have a role in meeting spiritual needs; but that none of the programmes and services currently does so overtly. The responses seemed once again to highlight an earlier observation that whilst interviewees acknowledge the YMCA's Faith legacy they are less sure on what that means other than to repeat that the practical delivery of services is how that Faith relationship is demonstrated. Responses included references to turning lives around and fostering visions of what a young person might accomplish. All appeared to suggest practical and tangible action. The one overtly Christian response suggested that whilst the YMCA is good at demonstrating to young people what Jesus did it is unsuccessful at sharing Jesus' teachings. That respondent felt that the YMCA tends to stop short of teaching young people to live their lives based on Christ's words. There was also a degree of consensus that the YMCA is more successful at addressing the spiritual needs of young people when these needs are concerned with community and personhood, but very much less successful when addressing Faith related spiritual needs. One interviewee suggested that Christian staff in the YMCA were the means by which the YMCA's spirituality ought to be expressed.

When asked how important it is for Chantry YMCA to meet spiritual needs the single most frequent response (7 out of 12) was “very important”. Three respondents said that meeting spiritual needs was the most important aspect of the YMCA and two suggested that it was of some importance. One respondent said that as a Christian organisation Chantry YMCA ought to be delivering at least some Christian input.

Questions about the YMCA’s activities to encourage spiritual development and exploration of spirituality drew a range of responses. Six interviewees said that they were not aware of the YMCA delivering any of these types of activities. Four other respondents said that all the YMCA programmes helped to achieve spiritual development because they focus on developing the whole person. This focus on the whole person was an underpinning theme in the interviews and one possible phrase that could describe the corporate understanding is ‘holistic spirituality’.

One respondent said they were happy to address spiritual questions from young people and would respond by referring them to church groups. One respondent suggested that the YMCA’s programmes developed a sense of “resilience” in young people and expanded their aspirations, which would result in a deeper spirituality. Two respondents provided poignant recollections of past activities that were designed by the YMCA or in partnership with churches with the express purpose of providing spiritual education. One example was a Sunday worship meeting. Young people attending the YMCA’s weekly evening youth club were expected to attend this worship meeting. The other example was described as probably being the very first mass sponsored walk in which young people met at church

where they were shown a Gospel film. They were then transported by coach into the Peak National Park for a mass overnight sponsored walk. It was attended by thousands of young people, many of whom recalled the sense of awe and unity created by walking through the night.

## **j. Christian basis**

This part of the interview began with an explanation of the history of the Christian basis Statement and the origins of the YMCA. The six statements that make up the Christian basis Statement are contained in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. They were read out and interviewees were asked to comment on their understanding of each and what they thought the YMCA's response was. Very early on in the discussions it became clear that it is possible for each of the six Christian basis Statements to fall into one of two categories. The first two can be described as being overtly Christian Faith-based:

- 1. Unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their Faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom.***
- 2. Lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in Him***

Those interviewees who describe themselves as active Christians felt that these two statements were central to the work of the YMCA. Those respondents who defined themselves as non Christian or marginal in the Christian religion thought that these statements were either not appropriate in their work or that the other four statements achieved the essence of the statements in practical ways. There was some agreement between interviewees suggesting that the Christian basis is concerned with being a voice for the voiceless, about unity in common work, sacrificial care and Christian leadership.

The last four statements are focussed on need, leisure, education and housing. In other words they express the essence of the Social Gospel:

- 3. Provide or assist in the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life.***
- 4. Provide or assist in the provision of education for persons of all ages with the object of developing their physical, mental or spiritual capacities.***
- 5. Relieve or assist in the relief of persons of all ages who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.***
- 6. Provide residential accommodation for persons of all ages who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.***

Nearly all interviewees felt that the Christian basis was very important to the work of the YMCA. All respondents, except one, also said that the Christian basis had never been explained. It could be argued with the greatest degree of respect that nearly all those associated with the YMCA have been working with limited understanding of the relationship between the central Faith-based reasons for the organisation's existence and its work. Most respondents did appear to understand the Christian basis as expressed in helping young people with their everyday issues, challenges and relationships.

The final question in this part of the interview asked interviewees to consider the relationship between spirituality and the Christian basis Statement in Chantry YCMA. One response was that spirituality is “much deeper than the Christian basis”. This respondent took the view that spirituality represents a deeply reflective backdrop to the focus on action inherent in the Christian basis Statement. The implication was one of interdependence. Another interviewee suggested that the Christian basis was in danger of being compromised through the organisation’s dependence on grant funding and that projects that were delivered through secular funding would face additional barriers to their exploration of spirituality.

The six Christian basis Statements are the core means of guidance for the YMCA’s charitable aims. They set the YMCA apart as a Faith Legacy Organisation. From the interviews it became clear that they are also a source of confusion and sometimes conflict within Chantry YMCA. Part of the contribution of this pilot study is to assist Chantry YMCA in finding ways to interpret and facilitate the Christian basis to make it more inclusive in practical ways. To assist Chantry YMCA Table Two below presents each Christian basis Statement firstly in an overtly Christian context and secondly in non faith language. The Christian interpretations are referenced to the Bible.

A CHRISTIAN FOCUS		A NON-FAITH OR SECULAR FOCUS
CB1	<i>James 2:21-23 and Matthew 28:19</i>	Working together.
	Faith and actions working together.	Teamwork.
	Christian unity of purpose.	Charitable activities.
	Sharing the Gospel.	
	Discipleship.	
CB2	<i>Matthew 28:16-20</i>	Achieving potential.
	The Great Commission.	Developing the whole person.
	The personhood of Jesus Christ informing the	Inspiring action.
	YMCA's care.	
CB3	<i>Hebrews 4:10</i>	Leisure and Recreation.
	Resting from work as God did.	Rejuvenation.
CB4	<i>Proverbs 4:22 and Timothy 3:17</i>	Formal and informal education for all.
	Sound Learning.	Learning.
	Being equipped for every good work.	Meeting needs and raising aspirations.
CB5	<i>Isaiah 61:1-3</i>	Safeguarding.
	Binding up the broken-hearted.	Representation.
	Being a voice for the voiceless.	
CB6	<i>Micah 4:4</i>	Housing and safety.
	Each will sit under their own vine.	Meeting needs in accordance with
	Homes for the homeless.	Maslow's hierarchy of Needs.

**Table Two – Describing the Christian basis of Chantry YMCA**



## **k. Inclusion**

Interviewees were asked to consider the relationship between the Christian basis of Chantry YMCA and inclusivity. All but one interviewee agreed that it is possible, within the six statements of the Christian basis, to meet the needs of young people irrespective of their own Faith positions. The one person who disagreed suggested that to truly apply the first two overtly Christian statements to young people could be “dangerous” and might be seen as an abuse of the YMCA’s authority. One respondent said that “discrimination is about unfairness, not about treating everyone the same”. Their perspective was that the YMCA might well discriminate against Christians by downplaying the Christian basis in favour of accommodating non Christians.

## **l. General Comments**

By way of drawing the interviews to a close, interviewees were invited to make further comments about the YMCA’s Christian basis, spirituality and inclusivity. A number of additional discussions were held which helped to build the corporate image of these three aspects.

Comments on the Christian basis Statements re-emphasised two stands of understanding. The first strand exemplified the perceived under-promotion of an overtly Christian approach as demonstrated by activities such as prayer meetings and proselytising to which all would be invited.

The main statements gleaned under this stand are:

- The YMCA needs to consider its vision and development as a Christian organisation.
- The YMCA needs to reinvigorate the Christian basis and achieve the first two statements.
- The Christian basis needs to be more visual through activities such as prayer meetings.
- The YMCA needs to be seen to be different.
- The YMCA should be seen to be Christian.
- The Christian basis needs to be explained better.

The second strand contains a nuance or hint of concern about the perceived dangers of over promoting the Christian basis at the risk of damaging inclusivity. The main issues captured include:

- Any expectation to deliver the first two Christian basis Statements would make it very difficult for some individuals to continue working in the YMCA.
- That overt activities such as prayer meetings and proselytising would draw barriers between people in the YMCA.

There were few comments about spirituality and inclusivity in the final section of the interviews. Closing remarks about spirituality seemed to emphasise the complexity and diversity of views. Statements like “spirituality is more than prayer meetings” and

“spirituality is still poorly understood” led me to consider just how confusing a generic term like *spirituality* is. On the other hand the reference to spirituality in the YMCA’s Christian basis is specific to “spiritual education”. Even in making allowances for the age and style of the language used it is still a more narrow definition which implies dialogue between teacher and pupil on spiritual matters and possibly on Christian Spiritual matters. Webster’s online dictionary defines education as the process of educating or teaching. Education is defined as “to develop the knowledge, skill, or character”. From this perspective spiritual education in the YMCA can legitimately be defined as activity that developed spiritual knowledge, skill or character.

Finally, two of the most striking closing remarks on inclusivity were that “Faith and Christianity don’t come into caring” and that “the YMCA exists because people care”. As has been suggested earlier, there was complete agreement on the need for the YMCA not to discriminate against anyone and the recognition that it is an inclusive organisation. It was interesting that the desire to care was seen as the best way in which to promote inclusivity. Put simply whilst ever the desire to care for others prevails then all will be included.

Having captured and catalogued information from the interviews I was able to reflect and begin to describe themes. The next section identifies the possibilities and probabilities against the four sub- questions set out in the introductory section.

## **Possibilities and Probabilities Arising from the Research**

The interviews yielded a catalogue of information and, upon analysis, I have been able to draw the findings into a core of six concluding statements which describe Chantry YMCA in terms of its approach to spirituality and inclusivity and the outworking of the Christian basis Statements. Together, these observations provide a set of possibilities and probabilities that are available for testing in other YMCA Associations. The statements are my comments on the relationship between the Christian basis and spirituality, spiritual education, the motivation for working in the YMCA, the limiting effects of youth work without spiritual education, understanding of the Christian basis and the tensions inherent in trying to implement the Christian basis.

***Statement One: The relationship between the Christian basis and Spirituality is complex.***

(Sub-question: What does the YMCA determine to be spirituality and spiritual needs?)

(Sub-question: Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?)

The relationship between the YMCA's Christian basis and spirituality is a complex one with three broadly defined categories in relation to spiritual education (Christian basis Statement 4). For some the relationship is governed by their personal Christian Faith and experience. Their hope for a better, effective life and a life hereafter is translated into a desire to ensure that young people are offered a similar experience and hope. A second category holds a more generic, philanthropic relationship where spiritual education is personally experienced

as deep introspection. It offers a time to reflect on life, on choices and decisions. For this group, their desire is for the YMCA to promote dialogue with young people and to generate discussion that will result in better choices and decisions. The third group contains a minority of respondents who consider spirituality as being wholly elective, suggesting that not all young people even recognise or accept the concept of spirituality. Their expectation of the YMCA is it not to deliver dedicated spiritual education. They would expect to refer young people to churches or religious groups if those young people asked for that type of guidance.

***Statement Two: Spiritual education is not proactively catered for in Chantry YMCA.***

*(Sub-question: What does the YMCA determine to be spirituality and spiritual needs?)*

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?)*

Spiritual needs are not catered for in a structured organisational response. Despite references to spiritual education within the YMCA's Christian basis, it appears not to receive a proportional level of resource in comparison to physical and mental elements of Christian basis Statement 4. Spiritual needs are either ignored or addressed on an ad hoc basis. Staff and volunteers are highly trained professionals, confident in delivering services that address physical, mental and some emotional needs. Nevertheless, there appears to be a distinct lack of confidence in addressing spiritual needs. This is at least in part due to a lack of specialist training, knowledge and skill. There is no proactive approach to delivering spiritual education.

***Statement Three: The overwhelming motivation in Chantry YMCA is care for Young People.***

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA respond inclusively?)*

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA respond effectively?)*

Young people, children and their needs are very much central to Chantry YMCA. Staff, volunteers and Board members who were interviewed were very clear about their motivation to work in the YMCA is the desire to help young people. None cited the YMCA's Christian basis as a motivating factor. Their philanthropic caring desire is, for some, an outworking of their Christian Faith, but they are equally comfortable achieving these outcomes in non Christian-based organisations. For others their motivation to help young people arises from a humanistic desire to help people to improve themselves. Interviewees of this persuasion cited their own upbringing in deprivation and need as a motivation to raise their own aspirations and subsequently a decision to help young people to do the same.

***Statement Four: A Lack of spiritual education limits the delivery of well-rounded youth work.***

*(Sub-question: What does the YMCA determine to be spirituality and spiritual needs?)*

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA respond inclusively?)*

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA respond effectively?)*

There is a lack of a clear directive approach to linking the overtly secular nature of YMCA programme delivery, the Christian basis and spirituality. The effect of this has been not only to dilute the significance of the Christian basis in the work of the YMCA, but at the same time to limit the effectiveness of youth work. Masten et al.. in their article “Resilience and Spirituality in Youth” in the Handbook of Spiritual Development in Childhood and Adolescence (Roehlkepartain, Ebstyne King, Wagener: 2005: 355) suggest that a literature review of writers such as Masten, Best and Garmanzy (1991) “noted that protective factors associated with Religion and Spirituality paralleled in multiple ways the protective processes implicated in general studies of resilience in the individual”. They suggest that whilst attention to spirituality can have some negative impacts the evidence suggests that there are distinct positive benefits in youth work when spirituality is made part of the offer. By not helping youth workers to develop the knowledge and skills to address spirituality, it can be argued that they are being made to work less effectively. In the same book, Blakeney and Blackeney (2005:376) in their chapter: “Delinquency: A quest for Moral and Spiritual Integrity” quote three separate studies by Wills et al. 2003, Regererus and Elder 2003 and Pearce et al.. 2003, all which suggest that the recognition and response to spirituality in youth work is effective at changing behaviour.

***Statement Five: The Christian basis Statement is not very well understood.***

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?)*

The Christian basis Statement has not been clearly communicated in Chantry YMCA. From the interviews it was apparent that almost none of the interviewees had ever been instructed in the detail of the Christian basis Statement. Only one respondent could recall having had an in depth discussion about it at the time of appointment. The others could recall it being mentioned simply as part of an interview question. As a result many of the interviewees were able to acknowledge the YMCA as a Christian-based organisation, but without being able to say exactly what that meant. It would appear that in Chantry YMCA, the Christian basis is not visible to all. On the contrary for some interviewees the interview for this research represented the first meaningful dialogue on the subject. For some, the Christian basis was nothing more than an unintelligible set of statements that have little relevance to their work. When interviewees did claim a reasonable grasp of the principles of the Christian basis they were, at various points, surprised at the implications of individual statements. The Christian basis appears to be located somewhere in the background of Chantry YMCA's work. It lives in the shadows with veiled references being made to how it is the motivation for the work of the Association when in reality for most operational staff, it is not as much of a motivation as their desire to work with young people.



***Statement Six: In Chantry YMCA implementation of the Christian basis creates tensions.***

*(Sub-question: Does the YMCA maintain its Christian basis?)*

Implementation of the Christian basis appears to be problematic for all interviewees. For those who are Christians working in the YMCA, the Christian basis Statements presented the challenge of how to incorporate Christian activity in the YMCA's delivery of secular programmes. For non Christians, the Christian basis Statements (and especially the first two) are a challenge to the way they deliver their work. The view held at a governance level that the Christian basis is evident in all the work of the YMCA and is upheld by senior staff is possibly sufficient to justify the latter four statements, but it does not embody the proactive overtly Christian essence of the first two statements.

## Conclusions

As I have worked on this research, it has become apparent just how important it is for an organisation to ensure that its history, mission, services and motivations are mutually supportive. This research has identified a choice which has arisen for Chantry YMCA from its attempts to become more relevant to contemporary society. In so doing, Chantry YMCA has continued to deliver excellent services but with the risk of those services not being totally effective at building resilience, because they lack aspects of spiritual education. A degree of apprehension was identified with some staff who felt perhaps that they did not have sufficient knowledge of spirituality and Faith matters to comfortably address the spiritual needs of young people.

The Christian basis is evident in the YMCA's governing documents, but it is only partly evident in the culture and is practically invisible or at least sublimely covert in the delivery of services. In seeking out Chantry YMCA's Spirituality, it has been difficult to see significant differences between the YMCA's services and those delivered by secular and statutory organisations. What is evident is the variety of approaches to spirituality resident in the descriptions of the people working in the YMCA. Without comparison with other organisations it is not possible to comment on whether the people in the YMCA were more or less spiritual than others.

In this research it has become apparent that the YMCA is blessed with a team who are passionate about the work of the Association. They are fully committed to inclusivity. This dedicated group are making a real difference to the lives of young people and their desire to

help them achieve their potential is very evident. The passion, motivation and drive appear to originate in different ways for each staff member, Board member and volunteer. This statement is important because the strongest unifying factor identified in the research is the desire to help young people. The analysis also gave a hint that this motivation was high irrespective of the interviewees' personal beliefs.

In answer to the question “***Does Chantry YMCA respond effectively and inclusively to the spiritual needs of young people in contemporary society whilst maintaining its Christian basis?***” the answer provided by this research is:

Chantry YMCA responds inclusively and effectively to the physical and emotional needs of young people, but less so where spiritual needs are encountered. Whilst the Christian basis can be seen to be evident textually, it is only partially discernable culturally and is therefore not visible in service delivery. Nevertheless, Chantry YMCA is attractive to young people in contemporary society and the organisation has to face the challenge of addressing the tension between this relevance and its Faith legacy.

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### **APPENDIX THREE: KEY WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS IN THE CONTEXT OF THE YMCA**

Affiliation	The process of formally joining the YMCA movement and agreeing to associate with other YMCAs towards the YMCA's common goal.
Association	In the context of the YMCA this is a reference to a feature commonly shared at two levels a) within a local YMCA the Trustees will agree to "associate their efforts" towards a common purpose and b) individual local member YMCAs will "associate their efforts" to achieve the YMCA movement's purposes.
Coordinator Staff	Staff working as project manager or team managers with responsibility for the coordination of the work of teams.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
Federated	The type of relationship where independent YMCAs work towards a common goal.
GOR	General Occupational Requirement
local association	Shorter term for Local Member YMCA
Local Member YMCA	The smallest legally constituted organisational unit within the YMCA movement in England. It is a registered charity as well as a company limited by guarantee. It has its own Board of Trustees, Memorandum and Articles of Association, these forming the constitution in keeping with the YMCA movement's shared aims.
Movement	A group of YMCAs working together to achieve the YMCAs aims. There is the worldwide YMCA movement and national movements e.g. the English YMCA movement.
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association.

#### **APPENDIX FOUR: EXTRACT MEMORANDUM AND ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION, CHANTRY YMCA**



3. The objects of the Association arise from its acceptance of the Basis of Union of the Young Men's Christian Associations of England, Ireland and Wales adopted by the British Young Men's Christian Association Assembly held in Birmingham in the year 1973, that is to say:

*"The Young Men's Christian Associations seek to unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom.*

*Any difference of opinion on other subjects, however important in themselves, shall not interfere with the harmonious relations of the Associations of the Young Men's Christian Association Movement in England, Ireland and Wales".*

Accordingly the objects of the Association are:

- (A) To unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom.
- (B) To lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in Him.
- (C) To provide or assist in the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life.
- (D) To provide or assist in the provision of education for persons of all ages with the object

of developing their physical, mental or spiritual capacities.

(E) To relieve or assist in the relief of persons of all ages who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.

(F) To provide residential accommodation for persons of all ages who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.

4. In furtherance of the objects but not otherwise the Association may exercise the following powers:

(A) To acquire take over and assume apply and deal with all or any of the assets and liabilities of the unincorporated Charity known as the Chantry Young Men's Christian Association (Incorporated) (registered charity number 250207) and (without limiting the objects and powers stated in this Memorandum) to carry on the work done by it.

(B) To apply for and thereafter maintain a Certificate of Affiliation to The National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (Incorporated).

(C) To establish and carry on new branches of the Association.

(D) To promote, provide and carry on or assist in any way in the promotion, provision and carrying on of facilities, societies and clubs of any kind and to arrange and hold meetings, conferences, lectures and training courses.

(E) To establish and support or aid in the establishment and support of any charitable associations or institutions and to subscribe or guarantee money for charitable purposes.

(F) To co-operate with other charities, voluntary bodies and statutory authorities operating in furtherance of the objects of the Association or of similar charitable purposes and to exchange information and advice with them.

(G) To provide directly or in association with others a counselling and advice service for men and women of all ages

- (H) To raise funds and invite or receive contributions from any person or persons whatsoever by way of subscription, donation and otherwise provided that the Association shall not undertake any permanent trading activities in raising funds for its charitable objects.
- (I) To purchase, take on lease or in exchange, hire or otherwise acquire real or personal property and any rights or privileges and to construct, improve, manage, maintain, alter, fit, equip and furnish any buildings, erections, hostels, houses and residential accommodation and holiday and other camps.
- (J) To sell, let, mortgage, dispose of or turn to account all or any of the property or assets of the Association subject to such consents as may be required by law.
- (K) To draw, make, accept endorse, discount, execute and issue promissory notes, bills, cheques and other instruments and to operate bank accounts in the name of the Association.
- (L) To undertake and execute any charitable trusts which may lawfully be undertaken by the Association.
- (M) To solicit, receive and accept financial assistance, donations, endowments, gifts (both inter vivos and testamentary), devises, bequests and loans of money, rents, hereditaments and other property whatsoever real or personal and subject or not to any specific charitable trusts or conditions.

- (N) To borrow or raise money on such terms and on such security as may be thought fit subject to such consents as may be required by law.
- (O) To invest the moneys of the Association in or upon such investments, security or property as may be thought fit.
- (P) To permit any money and investments of the Association to be held in the names or under the control of two or more persons or any company or other organisation as nominee or nominees of the Association and to pay such nominee or nominees reasonable and proper remuneration for acting as such.
- (Q) To delegate to any person company or other organisation any of the Association's powers of investment, administration or management of all or any part of the money and investments of the Association.

- (R) To lend any part of the moneys of the Association and to do so with or without interest or security, to enter into guarantees, contracts of indemnity and suretyships of all kinds and to become security for any persons, firms or companies.
- (S) Subject to Clause 5 (B) below to engage and pay any agents and employees and to make all reasonable and necessary provision for the payment of pensions and superannuation to employees, former employees and their dependants.
- (T) To pay all reasonable and proper premiums in respect of indemnity insurance effected in accordance with Clause 5(G) hereof.
- (U) To pay out of the funds of the Association the costs, charges and expenses of and incidental to the formation and registration of the Association.
- (V) To do all such other lawful things as are necessary for the attainment of the above objects or any of them.

5.

## **APPENDIX FIVE: YMCA BYELAW 8 – OUR COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER**

# NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YMCAs

## COUNCIL BYELAWS

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### BYELAW 8

#### OUR COMMITMENT TO EACH OTHER

**Adopted by the Council on 8 April 2011**

As Members of the National Council of YMCAs, key principles bind us together. Internationally the YMCA's expressly Christian common purpose was laid down in the Paris Basis of 1855, subsequently updated at the 1973 World Council meeting in Kampala, which evolved into the key principles of Challenge 21 in 1998. The YMCA movement in England adopted a Common Statement of Aims and Purposes in 2003.

In 2006 a fresh Vision Statement was subsequently embraced by the Movement, which was to:

“build an inclusive Christian Movement transforming communities so that all young people truly Belong, Contribute and Thrive.”

As individual YMCAs we are committed to the charitable objects of our Association. Collectively, in belonging to the National Council of YMCAs, we subscribe to understanding and respecting the work of other Member YMCAs in accordance with our commonly shared values.

Members of the National Council of YMCAs subscribe to its Memorandum and Articles. Therefore any body that is a Member of the National Council of YMCAs is expected, as a part of its mutual accountability to the YMCA movement, to fulfil “Our Commitment to Each Other” in these key areas:



- Commit to and uphold
  - The English YMCA movement's Christian Statement of Aims and Purposes and Vision Statement;
  - The Paris Basis of the worldwide YMCA movement
- Commit to adopting the YMCA model governing documents.
- Protect and enhance the good name and reputation of the YMCA.
- Commit to completing the three YMCA Insync Standard Workbooks, namely:
  - Clear Purpose
  - Governance
  - Management, Resources and Risk
- Commit to sharing information for the benefit of the Movement as a whole.
- Engage in the wider work of the YMCA movement, Regionally, Nationally and Internationally.

**APPENDIX SIX – OVERTLY CHRISTIAN CHARITABLE OBJECTS FOLLOWING THE PARIS BASIS.**

***1. Unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their Faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom.***

***2. Lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in Him.***

## APPENDIX SEVEN – PILOT INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

## ***The Interview Questions.***

### ***A. GENERAL QUESTIONS***

A useful starting point might be for you to tell me about your role in the YMCA. This will help me to understand the context of your involvement in the YMCA.

***A1. What is your role in the YMCA?***

***A2. What is it that motivates you in the work you do?***

***A3. What were your reasons for wanting to work for the YMCA?***

***A4. What attracted you to working in the YMCA?***

***A5. What do you like the most about your work?***

***A6. What do you like the least about your work?***

## **B. SPIRITUALITY IN CHANTRY YMCA.**

This set of questions is intended to help us to explore the understanding of spirituality in Chantry YMCA

### **B1. What are your thoughts when you hear the word spirituality?**

### **B2. When you try to define spirituality what do you think it is?**

*(Here is a range of prompt words to help :)*

<input type="checkbox"/> blend	1	<input type="checkbox"/> taboo	27	<input type="checkbox"/> a way of relating	52
<input type="checkbox"/> non-material	2	<input type="checkbox"/> hope	28	<input type="checkbox"/> community	53
<input type="checkbox"/> breath	3	<input type="checkbox"/> inwardly turned	29	<input type="checkbox"/> searching for something	54
<input type="checkbox"/> openness	4	<input type="checkbox"/> uncontrollable	30	<input type="checkbox"/> bonding with something	55
<input type="checkbox"/> beyond	5	<input type="checkbox"/> experience	31	<input type="checkbox"/> new age	56
<input type="checkbox"/> ourselves	6	<input type="checkbox"/> everything	32	<input type="checkbox"/> indefinable	57
<input type="checkbox"/> beauty	7	<input type="checkbox"/> conscious	33	<input type="checkbox"/> mantra	58
<input type="checkbox"/> awareness of others	8	<input type="checkbox"/> catharsis	34	<input type="checkbox"/> arts	59
<input type="checkbox"/> divine	9	<input type="checkbox"/> non-physical	35	<input type="checkbox"/> quiet time	60
<input type="checkbox"/> diverse	10	<input type="checkbox"/> biological spirit	36	<input type="checkbox"/> meditation prayer	61
<input type="checkbox"/> new	11	<input type="checkbox"/> peace	37	<input type="checkbox"/> connectedness	62
<input type="checkbox"/> experience	12	<input type="checkbox"/> reality	38	<input type="checkbox"/> dangerous	63
<input type="checkbox"/> human	13	<input type="checkbox"/> feeling	39	<input type="checkbox"/> searching	64
<input type="checkbox"/> incomplete	14	<input type="checkbox"/> emotion	40	<input type="checkbox"/> your God goes with you	65
<input type="checkbox"/> exploration	15	<input type="checkbox"/> no God	41	<input type="checkbox"/> wholeness	66
<input type="checkbox"/> fear	16	<input type="checkbox"/> ritual occult	42	<input type="checkbox"/> mediums	67
<input type="checkbox"/> Holy Spirit	17	<input type="checkbox"/> enrichment	43	<input type="checkbox"/> mystery	68
<input type="checkbox"/> a void	18	<input type="checkbox"/> transcendence	44	<input type="checkbox"/> transient	69
<input type="checkbox"/> uncertainty	19	<input type="checkbox"/> communion with God	45	<input type="checkbox"/> no absolutes	70
<input type="checkbox"/> God	20	<input type="checkbox"/> heart	46	<input type="checkbox"/> the unknown	71
<input type="checkbox"/> mystical	21	<input type="checkbox"/> depth	47	<input type="checkbox"/> fulfilment	72
<input type="checkbox"/> process	22	<input type="checkbox"/> connection with beyond	48	<input type="checkbox"/> confusing	73
<input type="checkbox"/> personal	23	<input type="checkbox"/> abstract	49	<input type="checkbox"/> choices	74
<input type="checkbox"/> collect	24	<input type="checkbox"/> Jesus	50	<input type="checkbox"/> different	75
<input type="checkbox"/> worship	25	<input type="checkbox"/> journey	51	<input type="checkbox"/> angels	76
<input type="checkbox"/> demons	26				
				<input type="checkbox"/> NONE OF THESE	77

For Me Spirituality is:

**B3. Which of these statements best describes the relationship between people and spirituality?**

- ☐ People are not spiritual.1
- ☐ People no longer need to be spiritual in the modern world.2
- ☐ People can choose to be spiritual if they want to.3
- ☐ People seek spiritual guidance when they have to face life changing things like death, disease and broken relationships.4
- ☐ All people are spiritual.5
- ☐ None of these. I think that:6

**B4. In what ways do you think that Chantry YMCA responds to the subject of spirituality?**

- ☐ *Spiritual needs in Chantry YMCA don't exist.*1
- ☐ *Spiritual needs in Chantry YMCA don't matter.*2
- ☐ *Spiritual needs are not Chantry YMCA's responsibility.*3
- ☐ *Spiritual needs in Chantry YMCA are met by:*4
  - a ☐ YES b ☐ NO c ☐ NOT RELEVANT Meeting people's needs whatever they might be.5
  - a ☐ YES b ☐ NO c ☐ NOT RELEVANT Meeting only the spiritual needs of people.6
  - a ☐ YES b ☐ NO c ☐ NOT RELEVANT Making it possible for people to participate in worship.7
  - a ☐ YES b ☐ NO c ☐ NOT RELEVANT Everything that we do helps to meet spiritual needs.9
- ☐ None of these. I think that:9

**B5. How important in Chantry YMCA is it to meet the spiritual needs of people?**

- ☐ The most important factor in the work of the YMCA.1
- ☐ Very Important.2
- ☐ Of some importance.3
- ☐ Not important.4
- ☐ Completely irrelevant.5

**B6. What does Chantry YMCA do to encourage the spiritual development of people?**

**B7. What opportunities are there for people to explore and express their spirituality in Chantry YMCA?**

### **C. THE CHRISTIAN BASIS OF CHANTRY YMCA.**

Chantry YMCA is a Christian-based organisation. This means that the YMCA's purposes were historically motivated by Christians and the Christian faith. The following six statements describe what Chantry YMCA is expected to do. For each statement please explain what you think it means. Then comment on whether you think that Chantry YMCA is doing this aspect of its work:

***C1. Unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Chantry YMCA does to achieve this?*

***C2. Lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in Him.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Chantry YMCA does to achieve this?*

***C3. Provide or assist in the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Chantry YMCA does to achieve this?*

***C4. Provide or assist in the provision of education for persons of all ages with the object of developing their physical, mental or spiritual capacities.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Chantry YMCA does to achieve this?*



***C5. Relieve or assist in the relief of persons of all ages who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Chantry YMCA does to achieve this?*

***C6. Provide residential accommodation for persons of all ages who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Chantry YMCA does to achieve this?*

***C7. Has anyone ever explained these six ways of working to you?***

***C8. How important, in your view, is the Christian basis in the work of Chantry YMCA?***

- ☐ The most important factor in the work of the YMCA.1
- ☐ Very Important.2
- ☐ Of some importance.3
- ☐ Not important.4
- ☐ Completely irrelevant.5

***C9. Do you have any examples to show how the services in Chantry YMCA reflect the Christian basis?***

***C10. How does Chantry YMCA link its approach to spirituality to its Christian basis statement?***

**D. THE NATURE OF INCLUSIVITY IN CHANTRY YMCA.**

***D1. In your opinion can Chantry YMCA achieve the Christian basis (the six statements mentioned earlier) and still meet the needs of young people from other faiths or no faith?***

a ☐ YES b ☐ NO

**If Yes, then how should Chantry YMCA do this?**

**If No, then what should Chantry YMCA do about the Christian basis statement?**

***D2. How can Chantry YMCA make sure that as a Christian-based organisation it does not discriminate against people who are not Christians or who are Christians or who have other faiths or who have no faith?***

**E. Summary and Clarification**

In this section there is an opportunity for you to add anything else that you feel ought to be included and for the researcher to seek further clarification on any of the answers that you have already given.

## **APPENDIX EIGHT – WORKBOOKS FOR THE FACILITATED GROUPS**

## **ACTIVITY ONE: SPIRITUALITY**

***C1. What are your thoughts when you hear the word spirituality?***

***C2. When you try to define spirituality what do you think it is?***

## ACTIVITY TWO: MOTIVATION

1. Why do you work in the YMCA?
2. What is your understanding of the relationship between spirituality and faith?
3. Do you know of examples of work in the YMCA which are motivated by the Christian faith?
4. Do you know of any examples of work in the YMCA which are motivated by something other than faith?

### ***ACTIVITY THREE: THE CHRISTIAN BASIS OF ANYTOWN YMCA.***

The YMCA is a Christian based movement with local YMCA organisations working locally and associating with each other regionally and nationally. This means that the YMCA's purposes were historically motivated by Christians and the Christian faith.

The six statements on the following pages have been taken from the shared governing documents and they describe the Christian Basis.

For this activity the same three questions are asked of each statement. Please read the statement and then answer each question in turn.

**1. Unite those who, regarding Jesus Christ as their God and Saviour according to the Holy Scriptures, desire to be His disciples in their faith and in their life, and to associate their efforts for the extension of his Kingdom.**

c. What do you understand this statement to mean?

d. Can you think of anything that Anytown YMCA might be doing to achieve this?

c. Please read the following statement and tick the statement that matches your answer:

WHEN I READ THIS STATEMENT I WAS SURPRISED.

- ☐ 1. = I strongly disagree
- ☐ 2. = I disagree
- ☐ 3. = I neither agree or disagree
- ☐ 4. = I agree
- ☐ 5. = I strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

## ***2. Lead young people to the Lord Jesus Christ and to fullness of life in Him.***

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Anytown YMCA might be doing to achieve this?*

*c. Please read the following statement and tick the statement that matches your answer:*

WHEN I READ THIS STATEMENT I WAS SURPRISED.

- ☐ 1. = I strongly disagree
- ☐ 2. = I disagree
- ☐ 3. = I neither agree or disagree
- ☐ 4. = I agree
- ☐ 5. = I strongly agree

*Please explain your answer:*



**3. Provide or assist in the provision in the interests of social welfare of facilities for recreation and other leisure time occupation for men and women with the object of improving their conditions of life.**

a. *What do you understand this statement to mean?*

b. *Can you think of anything that Anytown YMCA might be doing to achieve this?*

c. *Please read the following statement and tick the statement that matches your answer:*

WHEN I READ THIS STATEMENT I WAS SURPRISED.

- ☐ 1. = I strongly disagree
- ☐ 2. = I disagree
- ☐ 3. = I neither agree or disagree
- ☐ 4. = I agree
- ☐ 5. = I strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

**4. Provide or assist in the provision of education for persons of all ages with the object of developing their physical, mental or spiritual capacities.**

*a. What do you understand this statement to mean?*

*b. Can you think of anything that Anytown YMCA might be doing to achieve this?*

*c. Please read the following statement and tick the statement that matches your answer:*

WHEN I READ THIS STATEMENT I WAS SURPRISED.

- ☐ 1. = I strongly disagree
- ☐ 2. = I disagree
- ☐ 3. = I neither agree or disagree
- ☐ 4. = I agree
- ☐ 5. = I strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

**5. Relieve or assist in the relief of persons of all ages who are in conditions of need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.**

a. *What do you understand this statement to mean?*

b. *Can you think of anything that Anytown YMCA might be doing to achieve this?*

c. *Please read the following statement and tick the statement that matches your answer:*

WHEN I READ THIS STATEMENT I WAS SURPRISED.

- ☐ 1. = I strongly disagree
- ☐ 2. = I disagree
- ☐ 3. = I neither agree or disagree
- ☐ 4. = I agree
- ☐ 5. = I strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

**6. Provide residential accommodation for persons of all ages who are in need, hardship or distress by reason of their social, physical or economic circumstances.**

a. What do you understand this statement to mean?

b. Can you think of anything that Anytown YMCA might be doing to achieve this?

c. Please read the following statement and tick the statement that matches your answer:

WHEN I READ THIS STATEMENT I WAS SURPRISED.

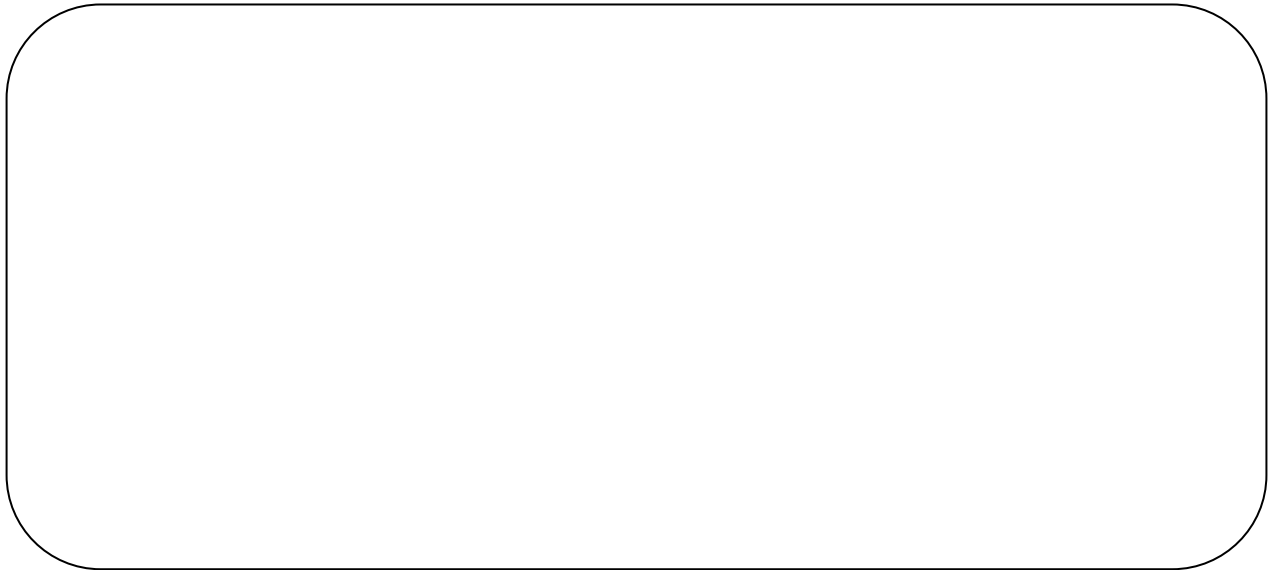
- ☐ 1. = I strongly disagree
- ☐ 2. = I disagree
- ☐ 3. = I neither agree or disagree
- ☐ 4. = I agree
- ☐ 5. = I strongly agree

Please explain your answer:

**7. Has anyone ever explained these six parts of the Christian Basis to you?**

- ☐ No.1
- ☐ Yes.2

If yes, please describe the process in as much detail as possible:



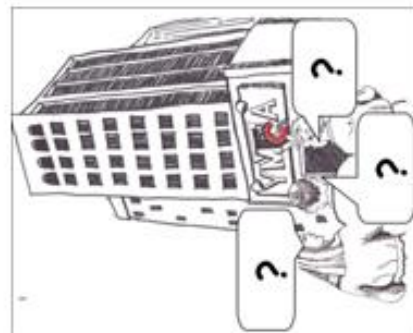
**8. How important, in your view, is the Christian Basis in the work of Anytown YMCA?**

- ☐ The most important factor in the work of the YMCA.1
- ☐ Very Important.2
- ☐ Of some importance.3
- ☐ Not important.4
- ☐ Completely irrelevant.5



# PIN THE 'C' ON THE 'Y'

WHERE DO YOU THINK THE CHRISTIAN BASIS MIGHT BE FOUND IN THE YMCA?  
THE IMAGES MAY HELP YOU TO CREATE A STORY ABOUT YOUR UNDERSTANDING.



# YM?A



**Y**oung  
**M**uslim  
**C**hristian  
**A**theist

**Please share your thoughts about the image/s you have chosen and what you feel about the Christian Basis in the YMCA.**

**If you didn't feel that any of the images helped to describe the nature of the Christian Basis in the YMCA then please describe your understanding of the relationship between the Christian Basis and the YMCA.**

**You can use this space to be as creative as you want to be. You can write something down or draw an image to record what your understanding is.**

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a student to write or draw their response to the prompts above.